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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA  
DICKENS AND DOSTOEVSKY: A STUDY OF FOUR NOVELS

by



SANDRA ERICA LAVOLD

A THESIS  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH  
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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Dickens and Dostoevsky: A Study of Four Novels," submitted by Sandra Erica Lavold in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



## ABSTRACT

Constant though often incidental comparison and contrast between Dickens and Dostoevsky occur in Dickens criticism, usually to reveal their respective merits. Freud's essay, "Dostoevsky and Parricide," analyzing *The Brothers Karamazov*, reveals a psychological structure conditioning Dostoevsky's work very similar to the hostility to parents many critics have noticed in Dickens. Crime, guilt and innocence pervade the works of both authors, and Dostoevsky himself acknowledged a debt to Dickens, on occasion deliberately imitating him. A comparative study would therefore seem rewarding.

I propose the thesis attempt two things: first, a brief survey of scholarship comparing the two authors; secondly, a discussion of the treatment of guilt, innocence, crime and punishment in four major novels: *Little Dorrit* and *Our Mutual Friend*, and *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov*.



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## CHAPTER I

### CRITICAL JUDGMENTS AND THE BASIS OF THIS STUDY

Books are not the world, but windows on the world. The windows of various houses can open a view on one and the same landscape; this landscape is one and the same, although it is variously seen. The likeness of the landscape, at the same time, is not a borrowing from one window by another.<sup>1</sup>

#### I

A group of patients occupying a hospital cancer ward become familiar with Leo Tolstoi's compelling fable, "What Does Man Live By?" Fascinated by their dread infirmities and facing the possibility of their own imminent deaths, these cancer patients attempt to answer Tolstoi's riddling question and, thereby, to come to terms with the meaning of existence--their own, and all of life. This setting is from Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's Nobel prize-winning novel, *The Cancer Ward* (1968), in which Solzhenitsyn employs the metaphor of the cancer ward to portray a cancerous society desperately trying to heal itself of its mortal illness by a series of curative purges. In the novel one of the characters, Shulubin, asserts the following:

But I would say that, especially for Russia, with our repentances, confessions of faith and uprisings, with Dostoevski, Tolstoi and Kroptokin, there is only one true socialism: *moral* socialism. And it is quite realistic. . . . It won't motivate people to seek happiness, for that is also an idol of the marketplace--'happiness'--but it will direct them toward loving one another. The wild animal gnawing at his prey is happy, but only humans can love, and this is the highest thing man can achieve.<sup>2</sup>



When Shulubin talks about "moral socialism," if his meaning is in an apolitical sense, then his *summum bonum*--the ability to love and its realization both individually and as universally as possible--constitutes a firmly held *credo* of two other novelists, Charles Dickens (1812-1870), and Solzhenitsyn's fellow Russian and one-time exile, like himself, Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881). In spite of its modernity, and excluding its specific analysis of Soviet totalitarianism, the message and, indeed, the images of *The Cancer Ward* harken back to similar explorations made a century earlier by Dickens and by Dostoevsky.

As the images of a diseased civilization and mortally ill citizens define the nature of Solzhenitsyn's world so, equally, the images of a diseased and disordered world are prominent in the works of both Dickens and Dostoevsky. Dickens' *Little Dorrit* opens on a prison scene in Marseilles, a city suffering from both a physical sickness (an epidemic) and a moral plague. When the travellers in that city return to their own home, London, they find its bells tolling "as if the Plague were in the city and the deadcarts were going round:"<sup>3</sup> and the bells toll for them as well. In Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, while the murderer Raskolnikov lies in a Siberian prison hospital recovering from an illness and asking himself "What would he have to live for?"<sup>4</sup> he has a horrific dream about the whole world falling victim to a "terrible, unknown pestilence."<sup>5</sup> (523) Tiny microbes possessed with will and intelligence--as Raskolnikov himself was obsessed with the will to power and the supremacy of reason--infect people until all but a select few are destroyed in that plague-ridden world. And if the "dark" novels



of Dickens' later period and the major novels of Dostoevsky present a vision of the world as disordered, disjointed and diseased, the source of the malignancy is the immoral nature of its citizens. For the diseased world to be restored to health and wholeness again, the activities of man must become moral. Moreover, for Dickens as well as Dostoevsky, the boundaries of human life are moral categories. Or, the difference between existence and death, or significant life and nihilism or nothingness, is an immoral act. Crime reduces or destroys a character's awareness of humanity, both of others and his own. The wages of sin is a loss of humanity. As many critics have observed, the evil characters in Dickens are involved in a kind of metamorphosis--in the turning from a human being into an animal, a monster or something totally resembling an inanimate object. Always, this atrophy or bestiality is the result of the characters' unethical activities and corrupt natures, or the product of the manifest corruption within the corporate body of society. Thus, the horrendous vision which Dickens presents in *Our Mutual Friend* is that society is a kind of macrocosmic corpse upon which a flock of scavengers are feeding. Similarly, in Dostoevsky's novels, certain characters are perceived as though they had lost their humanity. The pawnbroker, Elena Ivanovna, in *Crime and Punishment*, is viewed by Raskolnikov as though she were a louse or vermin. And Raskolnikov comes to think of himself as a louse. The act of crime not only turns man into a beast or a monster and isolates him from others--for they are still human and he is no longer--but his crime may separate him even from himself. Thus, Dickens' Jonas Chuzzlewit is afraid of himself after he has committed the murder and he becomes a prey, victimized by his



own murderous impulses and the mysterious images of his own mind. The licentious Svidrigaylov in *Crime and Punishment*, implicated in the death of his wife, his servant, and a young girl, envisions eternity as perhaps like a bathhouse full of spiders. Svidrigaylov's metaphysics is reduced to an hypothesis in which being becomes something insectile and grotesque. The rationalist Ivan in *The Brothers Karamazov* commits two "crimes": first, he does not accept God's world (his crime against God), and, secondly, he does not love mankind (his crime against others). Because of these offences, he is cut off from reality, for what is real to Dostoevsky is God and man, and Ivan is left with only an illusion, his hallucinatory devil. Konstantin Mochulsky explains this when he writes,

Only Ivan does not have his own world: he does not accept God's creation, that which is human is alien to him, he is disembodied. His sole companion is a phantom, the spirit of nonbeing, the devil.<sup>6</sup>

And in the latter part of *The Brothers Karamazov*, Ivan literally disappears from the novel because he is unable satisfactorily to reconcile the self and the world. His evil is his inability to love, and as such, he resembles a good many of the monsters of Dickens' invention. And this too is the source of their evil.

According to A. Bem in his article, "The Problem of Guilt in Dostoevsky's Fiction," paramount in Dostoevsky's thinking "is not the crime itself, but the guilt connected with it."<sup>7</sup> Guilt creates disharmony within a character's being. Guilt may be the result of the clash between what the unconscious desires and that which the individual actually does. Thus, Pip in Dickens' *Great Expectations* has hallucinations of Miss Havisham hanging, which must be recognized as he grows older as a sign of his own guilt and criminality. Arthur



Clennam in *Little Dorrit* feels so guiltily implicated in a nameless family crime that he is rendered impotent and willess. Raskolnikov can experience his guilt only in his dreams. But for Dostoevsky, as long as a man can feel guilt and is made to suffer, he is redeemable; thus, Raskolnikov's restoration becomes a viable possibility at the end of the novel. Guilt in Dickens may be a personal kind, or it may be created by the very nature of the organization of society itself. For example, because society approves and acknowledges the idea of unearned wealth, as in the case of the master-mind criminal, Merdle, in *Little Dorrit*, because the society accepts his activities and his empire, which are criminal, therefore, all the members of the society share his criminality and partake of his guilt. The apprehension of universal guilt and complicity is present in the works of both authors. Thus, Ivan's pronouncement at Dmitri's trial that all mankind is guilty of parricidal impulses is an acknowledgement of universal guilt. This is not unlike Dickens' indictment of the spiritual senescence of his Victorian citizens made unknowingly, although no less effectively, by William Dorrit's welcome of the citizens of Rome to the Marshalsea. Symbolically, the world is a prison and its citizens are guilty inmates.

If guilt is universally present and delineated in the worlds of the novels of both artists, wherein then is innocence to be found? The centrality of the child or of a childlike individual in the delineation of innocence is apparent in both Dickens and Dostoevsky. An inheritance from Romanticism, the child as moral symbol signifies a self in harmony with its own being, its world, and its creator. Men are judged in their moral proximity to the innocent child. Little



Nell goes through perils and trials with her gambling grandfather and is sought by the demonic dwarf, Quilp. The energy of Quilp's evil is augmented by Nell's contrasting innocence. Oliver finds himself in a den of thieves, and the immorality of Fagin's boyish group is made to appear more unnatural and corrupt by Oliver Twist's own goodness. Dmitri's ecstatic dream of the innocent babe accentuates his own guilt, and makes him ready to accept his fate. Raskolnikov dreams that he is a child watching a horse being beaten to death. The innocence of the child contrasts tremendously with his own guilt. Svidrigaylov, too, dreams of a child, but the child becomes a leering prostitute in the fabric of his dreams. The apprehension of an innocent child presents the possibility of a restored innocence. Unable to see innocence in the child of his dreams, Svidrigaylov is unable to have his own being restored. A comprehension of innocence is a pre-requisite to a future salvation. And the image of innocence is the child. Hence, the childlike quality of Raskolnikov's spiritual mentor, Sonya, is accentuated by Dostoevsky. Similarly, the diminutive childlike appearance of Amy Dorrit is stressed by Dickens in *Little Dorrit*. And innocence, as in the case of Sonya and Amy, may not be ignorance. Rather, they understand their world even in its injustices and deprivations, and, through love and service, they help to transform it, if only in small measure. Such is the moral vision delineated by Dickens and Dostoevsky.

To place four mature novels side by side and closely examine the similarity and the particularity of the authors' moral visions, and to postulate both the resemblances and the uniqueness of the artistry of both novelists, is the intent of this thesis. But before



commencing an analysis of the individual texts, some background should be given on the Dickens-Dostoevsky relationship. What did they know of each other? And how have critics linked these writers together? What resemblances and correspondances have they found?

## II

Dickens was immensely popular in Russia during Dostoevsky's lifetime as he was, without exception, wherever his works were published. The *Pickwick Papers* appeared in a Russian translation in 1838, a year after publication in England, and a magazine of that year forecast that Dickens' book would "outlive the nineteenth century."<sup>8</sup> In the 1840's, all Russian literary publications were including Dickens' writings, and translations were being made. Vissarion Belinsky (1811-48), the great social critic of that period and Dostoevsky's first champion, observed that Dickens' depictions of social conditions possessed "the terrible truth of reality."<sup>9</sup> By the end of the 1840's, Dickens' reputation had been firmly established in Russia. A letter written to Dickens by Russia's first outstanding translator, Irinarkh Vvedensky, testifies to this popularity:

For the last eleven years your name has enjoyed a wide celebrity in Russia, and from the banks of the Neva to the remotest parts of Siberia you are read with avidity.<sup>10</sup>

That Dostoevsky became one of these admiring readers is evident from many sources, although there is scant evidence that he read Dickens as early as the 1840's.<sup>11</sup>

An indication of Dostoevsky's veneration of Dickens is given by an acquaintance who recalled that Dostoevsky became very agitated one day because someone had criticized Dickens, describing him as a



writer of trifling children's fairy-tales. Recalling his defence of Dickens, Dostoevsky said, "But how could he [Dickens' critic] understand Dickens! He cannot even imagine his beauty, and dares to judge him. I wanted to call him a fool, and it seems I did. . . ."12

Vignettes of Dostoevsky in his later domestic *milieu* afford amusing and illuminating evidence of his preoccupation with Dickens. Dostoevsky's daughter Lyubov relates this of her life with her father:

When Dostoevsky went to Ems, or was too busy to read to us himself, he begged my mother to read us the works of Walter Scott, and of Dickens . . . . During meals, he would question us concerning our impressions, and evoke episodes in the novels. He, who forgot his wife's name and the face of his mistress, could remember all the English names of the characters of Dickens and Scott who had fired his youthful imagination, and spoke of them as if they were his intimate friends.<sup>13</sup>

According to Dostoevsky's second wife, during times of financial stress "Fyodor Mikhaylovitch used to call himself Mr. Micawber, and me Mrs. Micawber."<sup>14</sup> Her diary, kept during their trip to Dresden in 1867, indicates that Dostoevsky used to search the bookstores for novels of Dickens, and if, on occasion, he was unable to find any, would not substitute another novelist for him. When once an education-conscious mother asked Dostoevsky for a reading list for her child, he advised her that her daughter "should also read all Dickens's works without exception."<sup>15</sup> Incidentally, he considered some of his own works unsuitable for her.

What Dickens' novels Dostoevsky was familiar with is partially revealed by the index to his Letters which indicates that he read the *Pickwick Papers* (1836-37), *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840-41), *Dombey and Son* (1846-48), *David Copperfield* (1849-50), and *A Christmas Carol* (1843). A catalogue which his wife made of his library includes



*Bleak House* (1852-53) as well.<sup>16</sup> And there is a reference to *Oliver Twist* (1837-39) in his *Diary of a Writer*. What further reading of Dickens he did is purely conjecture. The principal references to Dickens are made after his ten years of Siberian exile. Although his principal reading during this period of penal servitude and life as a soldier was the New Testament, there is some proof that he was also given the *Pickwick Papers* and *David Copperfield* to read.<sup>17</sup>

It was in this "House of the Dead" that Dostoevsky experienced his spiritual "harrowing," after which he wrote his oft-quoted testament of faith: "It is not as a child that I believe in Christ and profess His teaching; my hosanna has burst through a purging flame of doubt."<sup>18</sup> The ambience of his Christian stance remains from this time until the end of his life, despite the contradictions exposed when his apocalyptic versions of universal Christian brotherhood are juxtaposed with his panrussianism, or, more humanely, when he displays his profound comprehension of the problems of faith. Significantly perhaps, Dostoevsky also called Dickens a Christian writer. In an article about George Sand (1876), Dostoevsky compares her to Dickens saying that "she did not like to depict in her novels humble people, righteous but yielding, holily simple-minded and down-trodden, such as appear in almost every novel of the great Christian --Dickens."<sup>19</sup> If this assessment is inaccurate in its blatant assertion of Dickens' Christianity--the substance of which has proved, at best, problematic and unsure for English critics--it is, on the other hand, a clear statement of Dostoevsky's sense of a spiritual affinity with Dickens.<sup>20</sup> In their writings, they both expressed a deep compassion for the poor, the fool, and the child or the childlike.



As a more specific expression of this mutual concern, in 1868 Dostoevsky wrote a letter to his niece to whom he was to dedicate *The Idiot*, in which he revealed his plan for the novel. He wrote:

The chief idea of the novel is to portray a positively good man. There is nothing in the world more difficult than that, and especially now . . . There is only one positively good man in the world--Christ . . . of the good figures in Christian literature, the most perfect is Don Quixote. But he is good only because at the same time he is ridiculous. Dickens's Pickwick (an infinitely weaker conception than Don Quixote, but nevertheless immense) is also ridiculous and succeeds by virtue of this fact.<sup>21</sup>

What is significant about this statement as well is Dostoevsky's observance of Dickens' linking of moral qualities with the ridiculous--the use of the grotesque--a literary device which he, himself, frequently employed.

To turn briefly to the question of influences, the most comprehensive study in English of influences was undertaken by Michael Futrell in his paper "Dostoyevsky and Dickens." According to Futrell, Dickens is mentioned directly in *The Eternal Husband*, *The Possessed*, and in an extended passage in *A Raw Youth*. Futrell's paper reveals that the most direct influences upon Dostoevsky's work are the characters of Little Nell and her grandfather in *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Nell is a prototype for Nellie in *The Insulted and Injured*, and Nell and her grandfather may also be traced in Svidrigaylov's dream in *Crime and Punishment*, as well as in *The Eternal Husband*, *A Raw Youth*, and in the early work *Netochka Nezvanova*. Futrell determines that the strongest thematic bond between Dickens and Dostoevsky is their compassion for and veneration of children. Of incidental influences, he cites the following:



The other influences seem to have been *David Copperfield* and *The Pickwick Papers*. From the first, David probably influenced Marmeladov in *Crime and Punishment*, Micawber and Heep may have influenced Ivolgin and Lebedev in *The Idiot*, and Steerforth, together with characters and incidents connected with him, may have contributed something to *The Possessed*--though this is highly conjectural. *The Pickwick Papers* influenced *The Village of Stepanchikovo*, and Pickwick himself supplied some inspiration for *The Idiot*. *Dombey and Son* probably exerted considerable influence on *Netochka Nezvanova*, written just at the time when *Dombey* made a deep impression in Russia.<sup>22</sup>

An earlier paper, "Steerforth and Stavrogin" (1949) presents the possible influence of Steerforth in *David Copperfield* upon Stavrogin in *The Possessed*. In this paper, G. Katkov puts forth the argument that *The Possessed* is, initially, a kind of literary political pamphlet in which all but one of the characters were developed from "prototypes" who were actual members of a revolutionary group headed by Nechaev. But Stavrogin himself has no "prototype" from Dostoevsky's own world. Rather, Steerforth, Copperfield's school companion, was the literary forerunner of Dostoevsky's own Byronic hero, Stavrogin.<sup>23</sup>

Although Dostoevsky read Dickens and acknowledged his greatness, conversely, Dickens had no knowledge of Dostoevsky. Dickens did, however, read Dostoevsky's contemporary Turgenev, who was the first of the three great Russian novelists of the nineteenth century--Turgenev, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy--to become popular in England. During the Crimean War (1853-56) some of Turgenev's sketches appeared in the weekly magazine, *Household Words*, which was founded and edited by Dickens in 1850.<sup>24</sup> Interestingly, both Dickens and Dostoevsky published the social reform novelist, Elizabeth Gaskell, in their respective journals. *Mary Barton* appeared in Dostoevsky's *Time* (*Vremy*), which flourished from 1861 to 1863, a social reform



publication dedicated to "the Soil" and expressing an "overt social and philanthropic purpose and . . . a call for class reconciliation."<sup>25</sup> Dickens published Elizabeth Gaskell repeatedly in *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*.

English translations of Dostoevsky's works did not appear in England until the 1880's. *The House of the Dead* (published as *Buried Alive*) was translated into English in 1881; *Crime and Punishment* and *The Insulted and Injured* were translated in 1886; in 1887 a new version of *The House of the Dead* (this time called *Prison Life in Siberia*) was published, along with *The Friend of the Family* and *The Gambler*. Constance Garnett introduced her translation of *The Brothers Karamazov* in 1912. It was not until after the publication of Garnett's translation that Dostoevsky was widely read in England.

The earliest reference to Dostoevsky in English publications, according to Helen Muchnic in her excellent work, *Dostoevsky's English Reputation (1881-1936)*, is an allusion to a Dostoevsky story mentioned by *The Athenaeum's* Russian correspondent in 1875.<sup>26</sup> Upon Dostoevsky's death in 1881, he was given due notice in English obituaries. Helen Muchnic observes that Dostoevsky was mentioned in several reviews of the 1880's including *Blackwood's Magazine*, *The Spectator*, and *The Academy*, the latter including a whole article devoted to Dostoevsky as well as a translation of a passage from "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor." One *Athenaeum* reviewer spoke about a character in *The Friend of the Family* as being "a kind of Russian Pecksniff."<sup>27</sup> When speaking about *The Gambler*, one reviewer in *The Spectator* compared the humor of Dickens and Dostoevsky, seeing Dostoevsky's as not unlike that in "the trial scene in



Pickwick . . . [which would] not bear without almost entire loss of its essential quality, reproduction in an alien tongue."<sup>28</sup>

Robert Louis Stevenson's *Markheim* was inspired by *Crime and Punishment*, and like Dostoevsky's *The Double*, Stevenson wrote a *Döppelgänger* as the story of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886).

The first comparison between Dickens and Dostoevsky of note was by George Gissing, in his *Charles Dickens, A Critical Study* (1898), who contended that the kindly treatment of the waif by the hero in *The Insulted and Injured* resembled Dickens' concern for the welfare of children. He also compared the writers' humor, noting that the beginning of *Crime and Punishment*, particularly in the scene in which Sonya's father, Marmeladov, makes himself known in a monologue, "abounds in Dickens-like touches in its lighter passages."<sup>29</sup> And then, in a burst of Dickensian loyalty, Gissing claimed that Dickens could have written the whole novel had he been poor and lived in Russia. But, in a reverse judgment, Gissing admitted that Raskolnikov's confession of his murder to Sonya was "beyond Dickens, as we know him."<sup>30</sup>

This question of how readers know their writers--of how they interpret them--becomes an important one when the effusively complimentary critical reception of Dostoevsky, and the equally waning reputation of Dickens, are considered in the early years of the twentieth century. Dickens was categorized as a social commentator,--in an extreme manifestation by George Bernard Shaw--as a revolutionary and not as a writer with any great psychological awareness. He was, rather, only a convivial humorist, a kindly writer of Christmas stories and a cheery celebrator of hearth and home. The



horrific experience of World War I appeared to eclipse the significance of Dickens' writings while augmenting the importance of Dostoevsky's anguished pronouncements.

Chief among Dostoevsky's apostles of that time was Middleton Murray whose *Fyodor Dostoevsky* (1916) presented Dostoevsky whom he defined as the "archhierophant of intellectual self-consciousness" and as a "prophet of a new mystical dispensation."<sup>31</sup> Analogously, Virginia Woolf described his novels as being "composed purely and wholly of the stuff of the soul."<sup>32</sup> And if later views of Dostoevsky in the present century do not demonstrate the furor and intensity of the Bloomsbury group, it is apparent that he is still revered and his influence upon English novelists considerable, notably upon Somerset Maugham, Aldous Huxley, Dorothy Richardson, Joseph Conrad, and E. M. Forster. The kind of influence which Dostoevsky had, for example, on Forster may be discerned in this passage from the prophecy section of Forster's *Aspects of the Novel* (1927).

Dostoevsky's characters ask us to share something deeper than their experiences. They convey to us a sensation that is partly physical--the sensation of sinking into a translucent globe and seeing our experience floating far above us on its surface, tiny, remote, yet ours.<sup>33</sup>

That Mrs. Moore's visits to the Malabar Caves in Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924) evoke this kind of response, as well, is most evident.

What fascinated the early twentieth-century critics was Dostoevsky's psychology, his awareness of the inner nature of man, and, particularly, of man as double. It must be remembered, of course, that the whole nineteenth century (to go no further back) was a preparation for this interest, starting with such promethean



figures of English Romanticism as Shelley's Prometheus, who is compelled to free himself from the tyranny of his own being. And there is Goethe's Faust with his "zwei Seelen", re-introduced into England as Thomas Carlyle's Diogenes Teufelsdröckh in *Sartor Resartus* (1833-34). These characters are conscious of the dichotomies of their existence--that between the flesh and the spirit in the individual self, and that between the world and man--and they wish to find a unity in all of life and a sense of wholeness in their individual souls. Or again, they wish to comprehend the whole of the vast "limitless space" and the mystery of the world; on the other hand, to use Oswald Spengler's definition, they are "led with a deep consciousness and introspection of the ego."<sup>34</sup> And if the Spenglerian pessimism owes an acknowledged debt to Dostoevsky in *The Decline of the West*, Dostoevsky himself is an inheriter of this Romantic dilemma. Thus, Dmitri, the son accused of parricide in Dostoevsky's last work, *The Brothers Karamazov*, is but yet another version of the Romantic bipartite nature when he cries "that a man of lofty mind and heart begins with the ideal of the Madonna and ends with the ideal of Sodom."<sup>35</sup> Significantly, these early twentieth-century English critics ignored the fact that Dickens too presented his own version of doubles (admittedly often contrived) in which the latent criminal impulses of his characters and their manifest guilt are expressed through the vehicle of an alter ego or a diametrically-opposed opposite. And in *Edwin Drood*, Dickens' characterization of the morally schizophrenic John Jasper most surely approaches the kind of dichotomy which Dmitri describes. More important, perhaps, to a discussion of a comparison of Dickens and Dostoevsky is the recognition



of their common inheritance of the Romantic notions of simplicity versus sophistication. And, paramountly, in their differentiation between the child and the adult, they both champion childhood innocence against the experience and consequent guilt of adulthood, and the child becomes an ideal, a model of moral perfectibility.

A resurgence of critical enthusiasm for Dickens by critics began in 1941 with the publication of Edmund Wilson's *The Wound and the Bow* in which he unfolds a previously undiscovered psychological depth to Dickens' works. And he directly challenges the previous reticence and criticisms of earlier critics when he writes the following: "The Bloomsbury that talked about Dostoevsky ignored Dostoevsky's master, Dickens."<sup>36</sup> Essentially, Edmund Wilson bases his comparison of Dickens and Dostoevsky upon a biographical argument, finding in their lives the source of the hostility towards parents which is evident in the writings of both novelists, as well as noting their pre-occupation with the subject of crime. According to Wilson, therefore, certain childhood trauma has manifestly affected the thinking and subject matter of both authors.

John Dickens, father of Charles, was improvident. He lived beyond his means until he, his wife, and all the children but Charles found themselves in the debtor's prison, the Marshalsea. The young Charles was compelled to work in Warren's blacking factory to assist the family financially. The secret of his family's three-month incarceration was a closely guarded secret which Dickens divulged only to his close friend and first biographer, John Forster, and perhaps to his wife. Recollecting his childhood experiences as a kind of *Oliver Twist* himself, Dickens said, "I know that, but for



the mercy of God, I might easily have been, for any care that was taken of me, a little robber or a little vagabond."<sup>37</sup> Throughout his life Dickens strove for class and financial security, the latter concern being so strong that he drove himself to severe illness at the end of his life with his readings and public appearances.

Dickens was ever plagued by his feckless father--in his sublime literary incarnations, William Dorrit, the Father of the Marshalsea, and the eternally impecunious Micawber--who took advantage of his supremely successful son, used his name to borrow money, and to claim through him, a vicarious prestige. Those critics following closely the life of Dickens can see the heroes and heroines of his novels--very frequently children who are orphaned, have only one parent, or have cruel step-parents--as being the outgrowth of Dickens' obsession with his own childhood. It should be acknowledged, however, that in both Micawber and William Dorrit there is considerable pathos and affection. Dickens' attitude towards his own father was most certainly indulgent.

Like John Dickens' family, the elder Dostoevsky's family was caught between social categories. Dostoevsky's father was a military doctor whose origins were obscure. He bought a country estate, and placed his children in a school for noble children. Yet, the elder Dostoevsky was aware that he could not quite live up to the aristocratic standards of living and that they were not of the same class. Hence, the children were made aware of financial and class conflicts. Dostoevsky's father became a drunkard and, when Fyodor was a youth away at engineering school, his father was murdered by his own serfs who hated him because of his cruelty toward



them. The murder was never brought to trial, although the identity of the murderers was probably known to those living in the area.

The scandal was, indubitably, quelled to protect the family. Of Dostoevsky's feelings toward his father, nothing definite is known.

Once he wrote this to this brother, Mikhail:

I am sorry for our poor father! A strange character! How many misfortunes he has sustained! It is bitter, even to tears, that there is nothing to console him with. And do you know, Papasha completely lacks knowledge of the world. . . . But he is deeply disappointed in it--this seems to be our common lot.<sup>38</sup>

From this, it would appear that Dostoevsky's sentiments were at least sometimes compassionate, although he rarely spoke of his father. If the murder of his father was a disquieting memory which haunted him throughout his lifetime, as it surely must have been, there was a final artistic explosion of this dark knowledge in his *magnum opus*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, with its subject of parricide and with all the brothers implicated in the death. Dostoevsky's daughter, Lyubov Fyodorovna, observed in her memoirs:<sup>39</sup> "I have always felt that while Dostoevsky was creating the character of the old Karamazov, he was thinking of his own father." "Who doesn't desire his father's death?" (621) asks the troubled Ivan at his brother's trial.

If Wilson began a re-evaluation of Dickens fostered by an understanding of Dostoevsky, what affinities, besides the biographical ones, have recent critics discerned between Dickens and Dostoevsky? Rex Warner in his *The Cult of Power* (1946) argues that both Dostoevsky and Dickens employed an allegorical method to provide an analysis of their societies. And what they saw in their societies, with their forces of violence and lawlessness, was just the selfishness and personal potential for evil of the individual writ large.<sup>40</sup>



While Warner concerns himself with the authors' view of society, Robert Morse in his essay on *Our Mutual Friend* (1949), differentiates between the kinds of impacts which Dickens' and Dostoevsky's respective visions have upon their readers. He observes that while Dickens' art has the same quality of excessiveness which characterizes the Russian's writing, Dickens' characterizations are not perceived with such immediacy as those of Dostoevsky.<sup>41</sup> Dwelling upon the "dark" side of Dickens, Edgar Johnson in his monumental biography of Charles Dickens (1952), makes the following formulation about the relationship between Dickens and Dostoevsky:

But though the dark vision never conquered the daylight vision, in all the novels there are scenes as if imagined through the fumes of the witches' cauldron [from *Macbeth*] that portend how slight a change in the balance of Dickens's emotional forces would have turned the Dickens world into a Dostoevskian world of guilt and anguish.<sup>42</sup>

J. Hillis Miller in *Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels* (1958) concerns himself with the ethical considerations of Dickens and Dostoevsky. He observes a similarity between the conceptions of good and evil in *Little Dorrit* and *The Idiot*. Miller feels that *Little Dorrit* is to Dickens' imaginative world what Prince Myshkin is to Dostoevsky's. What is remarkable about Prince Myshkin and *Little Dorrit*, Miller feels, is that both of them have been able to continue their childhood innocence into the adult world. In spite of their innocence, they are able to have a mature recognition of the wickedness of the world, and they can accept and love sinful people.<sup>43</sup> Dealing also with the question of good and evil, Miriam Sajkovic in *F. M. Dostoevsky: His Image of Man* (1962) observes that for Dickens and Dostoevsky, the sources of both good and evil are not in reason but in the heart. The solution to the problem of



evil for Dickens is purity of heart and not just a clean conscience. Dostoevsky's solutions are also intuitive, and involve the spirit of man in a redemptive process. And Sajkovic explains that the similarity between the writers is not unusual, since they are both writing from the biblical tradition.<sup>44</sup>

An article by Alexandra Wexler, "*Dickens und Dostojewski*" (1962), points out the common subjects of both authors.<sup>45</sup> According to Miss Wexler, the cardinal tenets of both Dickens and Dostoevsky include the right of each man to maintain and guard his individuality. And both authors defended the rights of the weak, the poor, the child, and the criminal. And she observes that the helpless child and the criminal especially fascinated these authors as subjects. She also observes the important roles played by devils or incarnations of devils in the writings of both authors, including the use of the *motif* of the *Döppelgänger*.

A Russian study, *Dickens in Russia (mid-nineteenth century)* by Igor Katarsky, was recently (1966) published in Moscow.<sup>46</sup> Katarsky's comprehensive study of the place of Dickens in Russian literature includes a chapter on Dickens' themes found in the work of Dostoevsky. In this chapter he speaks of the "inner affinity" between the two writers, but, until a translation of the work appears, the substance of this comparison must remain a tantalizing unknown to those who read no Russian.

In an American study, *Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism* (1965), which includes a chapter devoted to Dickens and his relation to Dostoevsky, Donald Fanger comments on their common use of "Romantic realism," or the fusing of the fantastic and the grotesque with the



realist tradition. Fanger's thesis is that Dostoevsky and Dickens both have the city, newly industrialized and commercialized, as the central image of their writing. And the city is a maze or a labyrinth in which the individual's identity is threatened. He establishes a kind of frame of reference for these two writers:

Dickens as the creator of a unique form of romantic realism, one in which a frequently tragic myth of the city is locked into a comic frame, the two elements intermingling to produce a vision whose grotesqueness leans to the comic as Dostoevsky's does to the tragic. . . .<sup>47</sup>

Fanger is careful to point out that he is conscious that the theme of the alienating city is not a unique feature of Dickens and Dostoevsky, but was a very important one in the nineteenth century. It was a part of the great wave of realism which swept the whole of a continent from Dickens' England, through Balzac and Zola's France, to Hauptmann's Germany and to Gogol's Russia, and, finally, it arrived at the Scandinavian countries, where, in 1879, Ibsen's Nora shook all of Europe with her emancipatory slamming the door upon her husband and family. And it was there too that the lonely Lutheran pastor, Brand, standing on a mountain top, having rejected his wife and family cried: "Why was the soul made flesh if love of the flesh is death to the soul?"<sup>48</sup> He chooses to follow his God according to the ultimate Kierkegaardian injunction of "All or Nothing." The bulwarks of the family were not strong enough to withstand the tides of new knowledge and evils bred and fostered in the great expanding seas of the modern European cities.

It is to the subject of the family, its continued influence, and its relationship to the moral idealism of the two authors, that the focus of the second chapter will be directed. Throughout,



the intent of this study will be solely to establish affinities--  
to observe similarities in structures, and themes--not to assess  
any questions of influence.



### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>This metaphor was composed by Victor Shklovsky and is used by Donald Fanger in *Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism*, p. 253. Fanger uses the metaphor as a defence of a comparative study between two authors.

<sup>2</sup>Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Cancer Ward*, pp. 511-513.

<sup>3</sup>Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, p. 28.

<sup>4</sup>Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 520. Throughout this thesis I have attempted to use the transliterations of Russian names from the Cyrillic alphabet in the form most commonly used in English studies. Hence, "Fyodor Dostoevsky" is the form adopted.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 523.

<sup>6</sup>Konstantin Mochulsky, *Dostoevsky: His Life and Work*, p. 600.

<sup>7</sup>A. Bem, "The Problem of Guilt in Dostoevsky's Fiction," trans. Irene Verhovskoy, rpt. in the Norton Critical Edition of *Crime and Punishment*, p. 658.

<sup>8</sup>Henry Gifford, "Dickens in Russia," p. 120.

<sup>9</sup>Quoted by René Wellek in his *Dostoevsky: A Collection of Critical Essays*, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup>Quoted by Michael Futrell in "Dostoyevsky and Dickens," p. 46.

<sup>11</sup>Only one reference is made to Dickens in the 1840's. Discussing a story by a minor contemporary writer, Dostoevsky wrote: "A certain Dickensian charm is poured out in the description of the last minutes of this quiet unknown life!" Quoted by Michael Futrell in "Dostoyevsky and Dickens," p. 44.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>16</sup>The catalogue of Dostoevsky's library reveals that *David Copperfield* and *Bleak House* were in French translations. The list of books of Dickens in Dostoevsky's library is found in Donald Fanger, *Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism*, p. 250.

<sup>17</sup>Michael Futrell, "Dostoyevsky and Dickens," p. 46.



<sup>18</sup>Quoted by V. V. Zenkovsky in "Dostoevsky's Religious and Philosophical Views," rpt. in René Wellek's *Dostoevsky: A Collection of Critical Essays*, p. 130.

<sup>19</sup>Quoted in Michael Futrell's "Dostoyevsky and Dickens," p. 49.

<sup>20</sup>A good treatment of Dickens' religious views is found in Humphry House's *Dickens World*.

<sup>21</sup>Quoted by Michael Futrell in "Dostoyevsky and Dickens," p. 47.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>23</sup>George Katkov, "Steerforth and Stavrogin," *Slavonic and East European Review*, pp. 469-488.

<sup>24</sup>George H. Ford, *Dickens and his Readers*, p. 191.

<sup>25</sup>C. A. Johnson, "Russian Gaskelliana," *A Review of English Literature*, p. 46.

<sup>26</sup>Helen Muchnic, *Dostoevsky's English Reputation: 1881-1936*, p. 7.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 20

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>31</sup>Quoted by René Wellek in his *Dostoevsky: A Collection of Critical Essays*, p. 11.

<sup>32</sup>Quoted by George H. Ford, *Dickens and his Readers*, p. 195.

<sup>33</sup>E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, pp. 194-195.

<sup>34</sup>Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, p. 183.

<sup>35</sup>Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 101.

<sup>36</sup>Quoted by George H. Ford, *Dickens and his Readers*, p. 195.

<sup>37</sup>Quoted in Edgar Johnson's *Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph*, p. 39.

<sup>38</sup>Avrahm Yarmolinsky, *Dostoevsky: His Life and Art*, p. 32.

<sup>39</sup>Konstantin Mochulsky, *Dostoevsky: His Life and Work*, p. 7.



<sup>40</sup>Rex Warner, *The Cult of Power*, pp. 41, 108-109.

<sup>41</sup>Robert Morse, *Our Mutual Friend*, rpt. in *The Dickens Critics*, ed. George H. Ford Lauriat Lane, Jr., p. 211.

<sup>42</sup>Edgar Johnson, *Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph*, pp. 163-164.

<sup>43</sup>J. Hillis Miller, *Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels*, p. 63.

<sup>44</sup>Miriam T. Sajkovic, *F. M. Dostoevsky: His Image of Man*, p. 173.

<sup>45</sup>Alexander Wexler, "Dickens und Dostojewski," *Deutsche Rundschau*, pp. 732-740.

<sup>46</sup>This information is found in Nikolai Zhegalov's article, "Dickens in Russia," *Soviet Literature*, pp. 170-171, which is a review of an exhaustive study, Igor Katarsky's *Dickens in Russia (mid-19th century)*, published in Moscow in 1966. Katarsky also collaborated with Yuri Fridlander to compile an extensive bibliography of Russian translations and literary criticism of Dickens (1962). The Fridlander-Katarsky bibliography cites 2256 items by or about Dickens.

<sup>47</sup>Donald Fanger, *Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism*, p. 252.

<sup>48</sup>Henrik Ibsen, *Brand*, p. 85. I should also qualify that although Ibsen is considered to be part of that spirit of realism, his plays are, in part, very symbolic. There has been an article written which questions whether there are echoes of *Our Mutual Friend* in *The Doll's House*. See S. Weintraub in *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, XIII (1958), pp. 67-69.



## CHAPTER II

### FAMILIES ON TRIAL

Each torpid turn of the world has such disinherited children,  
to whom no longer what's been, and not yet what's coming, belong.  
Karl Maria Rilke, "Seventh Elegy"

The Victorian age was characterized by enormous change and contrast. With seemingly infinite optimism, its citizens contemplated unending progress. Yet, its ideologies, reforms, innovations, as well as the appeals for the *status quo*--the "ignorant armies" of an age of transition--produced in their "clash by night,"<sup>1</sup> an aura of anxiety and apprehension as well. The optimism and belief in progress of the Victorian period were fostered by the Reform bills, the great advances made in science and technology, and the tenets of the Philosophic Radicals or Utilitarians. The doubts were engendered by the conflict between the new science of Darwin and the old faith, by the shift of power from the landed aristocracy, complacent through centuries of privilege, to the "captains of industry," and by a consciousness that "Respectability with her thousand gigs" couched a callousness and an inner void. And it was an age in which soul-searching and desire for eternal salvation advocated by the various Evangelical movements, were no less in evidence than the secular "hedonistic calculus"--the utility of the greatest happiness principle--of the Utilitarians, misnomered the "pig philosophy" by Thomas Carlyle.<sup>2</sup> Yet, there remained in this period of transition and antithesis two principal "articles of the common Victorian faith,"<sup>3</sup> representative institutions and the family.



*Little Dorrit* (1855-57) is an examination of both of these *credos*, but by the time of its publication, Dickens had become disillusioned with the workings of the former, and was convinced of the ineffectualness of parliamentary procedures. Expressing this view, Dickens wrote to his friend, John Forster:

I really am serious in thinking--and I have given as painful consideration to the subject as a man with children to live and suffer after him can honestly give to it--that representative government is become altogether a failure with us, that the English gentilities and subserviencies render the people unfit for it, and that the whole thing has broken down since that great seventeenth-century time, and has no hope in it.<sup>4</sup>

Even though Dickens altered some of his views as he matured, becoming discernably more conservative, he maintained his disenchantment with government until the end of his life.<sup>5</sup> The oft-quoted and disputed statement which he delivered at the Birmingham and Midland Institute in 1869 is a testament to this disbelief in the efficacy of parliament. As his political manifesto he proclaimed the following:

I will now discharge my conscience of my political creed, which is contained in two articles, and has no reference to any party or persons. My faith in the people governing is, on the whole, infinitesimal; my faith in the people governed is, on the whole, illimitable.<sup>6</sup>

The chapter entitled "Containing the Whole Science of Government" in *Little Dorrit*, gives ample evidence of Dickens' frustration with the encumbrances of government bureaucracies. That right arm of government, the civil service, represented in the novel as the Circumlocution Office, is Dickens' artistic indictment of administrative inefficiencies, red tape, undeviating routine, the preponderance of aristocratic influences within its structures, the debilitation wrought by its powerful inertia, its refusal of all creativity, and above all its total disregard for the people it, by its defined



function, was designed to aid. Fittingly, Dickens in *Little Dorrit* gives as its *modus operandi* "How not to do it (104)."<sup>7</sup> The culmination of the administrative offices' bungling during the time of the writing of *Little Dorrit* was the mismanagement of the Crimean War, in which the total inadequacies of the camps, supplies, and hospitals, and the innumerable needless deaths of that war, were directly attributable to the administration.

While Russia's war with England and its allied powers in the Crimea had come to an ignominious end two decades before the writing of *The Brothers Karamazov* (1878-80), Dostoevsky's peace with Western Europe had never been truly made. His was not a personal antipathy towards the West. Rather, he expressed a determination, as a Slavophile--as an adherent to that ideology antithetical to Westernism--to preserve all that was uniquely Russian against the infiltration of western influences.<sup>8</sup> And England, as "the workshop of the world," a developing democracy, and a scientifically and technologically advancing nation, epitomized, for Dostoevsky, an ideological "threat."<sup>9</sup>

Dostoevsky visited London, or "a new Babylon" as he termed it in 1862, and while there, he toured the Crystal Palace at Sydenham. The Crystal Palace, built for the Great Exhibition of 1851, was, in British eyes, a testament to England and Europe's great industrial and scientific achievements, and a symbol of civilization's progress. According to Dostoevsky's forecast, however, science and material achievements would someday destroy man by their absolute reliance upon reason. Man, reduced to reason, without desire and the right to exercise his individual will and impulse, will, as the Man from



Underground prognosticates it, be reduced to the role of an organ stop or a piano key. Civilization will become a universal ant-heap.

If Dostoevsky rejected the West because of its materialism, and as an attempt to guard Russia against western influences, when he delivered his impassioned Pushkin Address in 1880, it was said that he temporarily reconciled the Westerners with the Slavophiles, expounded a universalism, and determined what he felt was to be Russia's almost messianic role in an apocalypse. He said in this famous speech:

Yes, the Russian's destiny is incontestably all-European and universal. To become a genuine and all-around Russian means, perhaps (and this you should remember), to become brother of all men, *a universal man*, if you please. Oh, all this Slavophilism and this Westernism is a great, although historically inevitable, misunderstanding . . . And later--in this I believe --we, well, not we but the future Russians, to the last man, will comprehend that to become a genuine Russian means to seek finally to reconcile all European controversies, to show the solution of European anguish in our all-humanitarian and all-unifying Russian soul, to embrace in it with brotherly love all our brethren, and finally, perhaps, to utter the ultimate word of great, universal harmony, of the brotherly accord of all nations abiding by the law of Christ's Gospel!<sup>10</sup>

What Dostoevsky envisioned, therefore, was a utopian idea of transforming the state--the whole world-wide temporal order--into a universal Church, a pan-world orthodoxy, in sum. As Father Païssy describes this in *The Brothers Karamazov*,

the State is transformed into the Church, will ascend and become a Church over the whole world . . . and is only the glorious destiny ordained for the Orthodox Church. This star will arise in the east!(63)<sup>11</sup>

In the novel, Dostoevsky presents what are three principal tenets concerning this future universal church. First, he argues for its moral superiority in convicting and rehabilitating criminals, for "it is only against the Church, and not against the State, that the



criminal of to-day can recognize that he has sinned." (62) Secondly, Dostoevsky demonstrates what the Church must not be. This he portrays through the "negative exemplar" of "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor," in which the church of the Grand Inquisitor is really a temporal state, merely masking itself behind the vestments of Christianity as a means of preserving itself and retaining cohesion.<sup>12</sup> And this quasi-church couches its true nature which is totally materialistic, atheistic, and socialistic. But thirdly, through the sayings of Father Zossima, the Russian elder, and the actions of the young novitiate, Alyosha, the true process of the establishment of a universal church is evidenced. Summarily, it is in the practise of brotherhood that this is to be effected.

For Dostoevsky, the instruments of a dominant future orthodox Russia were to be the peasants, for they, unlike the upper classes, had not lost their faith. And, for Dostoevsky, the chief *malaise* of the educated classes was their atheism. Accordingly, the church could only be established by those adhering to the faith, that is by the peasants. Illustrating this dependence upon the peasantry, Dostoevsky writes the following in *The Brothers Karamazov*:

But God will save Russia, for though the peasants are corrupted and cannot renounce their filthy sin, yet they know it is cursed by God and that they do wrong in sinning. So that our people still believe in righteousness, have faith in God and weep tears of devotion. . . . Salvation will come from the people, from their faith and their meekness (286).

While Dostoevsky has been criticized for placing his faith in a class with whom he had virtually no contact, it must be remembered that the intelligentsia were very preoccupied with the education and improvement of the peasants in the 1860's, particularly with attempts



to develop within them a political consciousness.<sup>13</sup> Hence, he was continuing a concern that had been widely prevalent in the immediate past.

Considering Dostoevsky's view of contemporary politics, it is observed that he had absolutely no faith in western democratic procedures. A constitution, which was roughly drafted at the turn of the nineteenth century, was abandoned because of the more urgent pressures of the Napoleonic invasion. For Dostoevsky, the absence of a constitution represented no loss to Russia, and he termed it "that European wench."<sup>14</sup> What Dostoevsky desired for the immediate political future of Russia was basically a father-child relationship between the tsar and the peasant, a direct relationship without the incumbrances of parliamentary procedures; essentially, therefore, the retention of autocracy.

It can be observed in both Dostoevsky's apocalyptic visions, and in his delineations of the course of the current political system, that he employs familial terms. When contemplating the future of Russia, and, indeed, of all humanity, he thinks in terms of a family writ large. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky has used the family as an organizational and thematic basis of the novel. While the family is central to the novel, it must be emphasized that Dostoevsky is not celebrating domesticity and the principles of individual family insularity and solidarity. For he considered that family life of this nature was rapidly becoming an anachronism in Russian life. Of this he wrote the following in his *Diary of a Writer* in July-August of 1877:



Never has the Russian family been more shaken, disintegrated, unsorted, and formless than at present. Where will you find today "Childhoods and Boyhoods" that could be represented in such clear and harmonious fashion as that, for example, of Count Leo Tolstoy, in his depiction of his own epoch and *his own family*, or in his *War and Peace*? All these creations are *now no more than historical pictures of the distant past . . .* The contemporary Russian family is becoming more and more an *accidental* family. Precisely *accidental*--there you have the definition of the contemporary Russian family.<sup>15</sup>

While Dostoevsky observes the disruption of individual families in Russian life, he does not, nostalgically, advocate the return of these insular, individual families. Rather, he hopes, as he wrote in *The Notebooks for The Brothers Karamazov* that the family will become "more encompassing; other than relatives enter into it, the beginning of a new organism begins to develop."<sup>16</sup> The family will become enlarged, and ultimately universalized. Yet, it will retain its original function, what Dostoevsky also explains in *The Notebooks* as "the family as the practical basis of love."<sup>17</sup> The ideal is a universal brotherhood, a pan-world family united by the example of Christ.

If, as Dostoevsky observed, the Russian family was becoming increasingly "accidental," to the Victorian citizen, on the contrary, the individual family was the centre of his life. As an institution, it was cherished, upheld, and, ultimately, idealized. With this view of the family, Dickens concurred. In Dickens, the ideal of the family becomes a model of human relationships and behavior. Dostoevsky holds basically the same view, except that for him, the family is conceived macrocosmically rather than microcosmically or individually.



To return momentarily, therefore, to the question of Dickens and Dostoevsky's belief or disbelief in politics and the family, it can be affirmed that both Dickens and Dostoevsky disbelieved that mankind's amelioration could be effected through the existing machinery of their respective governments. But it was with a great deal of concern and some confidence that they turned to that second article of faith, and, in reality, that microcosm of politics, the family. Keeping in mind the specific interpretations of the family which the authors held, both *Little Dorrit* and *The Brothers Karamazov* can be approached as studies in families. Through parent-child relationships and functions in the novels these authors present their visions, both of the natures of their existing societies, and the interpenetrations between societal values and concerns and the values of individual families. In *The Brothers Karamazov* Dostoevsky also posits, in "The Grand Inquisitor," a backward-looking anti-utopia based upon certain family precepts. And, as an alternative to this totalitarian "family" of the Grand Inquisitor, Dostoevsky attempts to restructure the family basis, from a paternal to a fraternal organization.

In *Little Dorrit*, Dickens presents a hierarchy of families with each family portrayed representing a socio-economic class or segment of the macrocosmic societal family. Each family may be tested against the idea of a true family--the Victorian ideal of familial duty, responsibility, and love--and the resultant collision between ideal and actuality provides the basis of Dickens' social satire. In delineating these societal groups, Dickens' satire is directed particularly against the parental figures. These authoritative



heads are usually inadequate, irresponsible, hypocritical, or heedless, in the carrying out of their duties toward their "children."

Pinnacling the society are the titled Barnacles and their lesser relatives, the Stiltstalkings. As symbolic fathers or authoritative heads and administrators of the country, their responsibility should extend to the whole of society. What Dickens portrays, through the Barnacles, "a very high family, and a very large family (107)" is his view that the aristocracy is intent upon guarding the old established forms, for within the protective confines of convention and tradition, they can harbour their own selfishness and desire for privilege. Their societal duties are carried out by Lord Decimus Tite Barnacle, the Behoving Machine of state inactivity. Lord Decimus Tite Barnacle does not need to become personally involved in this process of dehumanization, for his state departments--the whole of the Circumlocution Office--does this so effectively. His role, as a titular head of the society (the macrocosmic family) is largely one of non-involvement. Dickens like Thomas Carlyle felt that the peers of the House of Lords neglected the job of governing. Lord Decimus' consciousness of the collective societal "children" is only that they exist as a piece of foolscap, a form. As Dickens wrote in *Household Words*, to the government "the People is altogether an abstraction to them; a Great Baby."<sup>18</sup> If an individual should address himself to the Circumlocution Office, and thereby assert his reality, he is, like the inventor Doyce, made to feel that he is an offender or a guilty criminal. Of Doyce's efforts, the complacent bourgeois, Mr. Meagles, explains,



The moment he addresses himself to the Government, he becomes a public offender . . . he ceases to be an innocent citizen, and becomes a culprit. He is treated from that instant as a man who has done some infernal action. (119).

And furthermore, Doyce's projects, which would better English life, are rejected. Contact with the Circumlocution Office results, therefore, in the engendering of guilt feelings, the denial of creativity, and in dehumanization. The destruction wrought by the Circumlocution Office's procedures is evidenced by the following passage:

Numbers of people were lost in the Circumlocution Office. Unfortunates with wrongs, or with projects for the general welfare . . . who in slow lapse of time and agony had passed safely through other public departments; who, according to rule, had been bullied in this, over-reached by that, and evaded by the other; got referred at last to the Circumlocution Office, and never reappeared in the light of day. Boards sat upon them, secretaries minuted upon them, commissioners gabbled about them, clerks registered, entered, checked, and ticked them off, and they melted away. (105-6)

More devastating however than this, according to Dickens, is the omniscience which the Circumlocution Office, with its myriads of secret files, is on occasion presumed to possess. Arthur Clennam incessantly visits the Circumlocution Office relentlessly wanting "to know, you know" (208), for he senses a moral *malaise* within and without himself. And he feels that his family (note, again, a familial concern) is implicated in the evils and injustices around him, and, specifically, in the incarceration of the Dorrit family in the Marshalsea. The secret of his family's involvement, he believes, can be discovered in the *dossiers* of the Circumlocution Office. His attempts to penetrate the labyrinthine bureaucracy end, however, in total failure and this is morally and artistically



appropriate. For Dickens was aware that this gnawing, undefinable, encompassing sense of guilt and corruption was too universal to be pinpointed and attributed to a single family, an evil cause, or even to the whole of the governmental offices. Furthermore, Arthur Clennam's compulsion "to know" represents, in truth, a kind of meta-physical quest. It is an attempt to come to terms with his mental anguish and spiritual senescence by way of an institution which, at best, may be described as indifferent, if not vexed, at his problems.

While Clennam, in his approaches to the Circumlocution Office, demonstrates a misdirected spiritual quest, when Dickens presents the parvenu economic family, he affirms that the devotion of the population to Merdle, that is to money, is sheer idolatry. Merdle is revered to the point where he is considered a golden calf, a graven image, and an object of worship to a society suffering from what Dickens' mentor, Thomas Carlyle, termed "mammonism." Of Merdle, Dickens writes:

All people knew (or thought they knew) that he had made himself immensely rich; and, for that reason alone, prostrated themselves before him, more degradedly and less excuseably than the darkest savage creeps out of his hole in the ground to propitiate, in some log or reptile, the Deity of his benighted soul. (556)

The Merdles are revered by all the other "Philistines," for this family alone appears to be founded upon a solid, economic foundation. Merdle and his worshippers are clear examples of the trend of his age to substitute for the charity of the New Testament Gospels what Carlyle in *Past and Present* described as "The Gospel of Mammonism," in which the cash nexus or the bond of money is "the sole relation of human beings."<sup>19</sup> Hell, to the English soul is the terror of not



succeeding, "of not making money!"<sup>20</sup> In the novel, this is clearly what the characters are doing. What must I do to be saved? Dickens gives the characters' answer when he writes that Merdle "the rich man, . . . had in a manner revised the New Testament, and already entered into the kingdom of Heaven." (614) Salvation is sought in material terms; economic and social success is, indeed, a measure of grace according to the Merdle worshippers. But Merdle is a gross parody of the Apostle healing the sick (614) for he is a creature motivated solely by self-interest, and he dies in a public bath by his own penknife, a "dying god" without a glimmer of resurrection. As an economic father, Merdle is totally impervious to the needs of society. Furthermore, he has no compunctions about financially destroying anyone in the society, including his son's father-in-law, the newly rich Mr. Dorrit. He violates the code of familial duty and responsibility. Through his financial schemes, he destroys many, and his guilt is considerable.

In Dicken's presentation of the Clennam family, familial duty and religious impulses are equally as perverted as in the veneration by society of the "visible graven image," (483) of Mr. Merdle. What Mrs. Clennam, in her

creed too darkly audacious to pursue, through its process of reversing the making of man in the image of his Creator to the making of his Creator in the image of an erring man, (165)

does to her son is to stultify him, to render him without will and without purpose. Furthermore, Mrs. Clennam withholds her affection from her son out of a sense of injured justice, for she felt herself abused because her husband loved another--a dancing girl--and not herself. Parental responsibility is, indeed, just the expression



of self-indulgence disguised as the meting out of justice, a rightful retribution. And following the pattern of the substitution of spiritual and religious values by economic concerns, which Dickens employs throughout the novel, Mrs. Clennam works out her own salvation--her expiation for a sin which she feels she has committed--by a kind of economic restitution based upon bartering. She pays for her error by a series of acts of self-renunciation--the larger penances include her self-imposed isolation, and the minor, her refusal of the delectable oysters at her evening meal. By these measures she can correct the divine Day-Book.

The "hell of not succeeding" is very clearly described by Dickens in his depiction of the lower strata of society. As the two-fold division of the novel into books, "Poverty" and "Riches" indicates, the England of *Little Dorrit* is "two nations," the rich and the impoverished. The home of the poor is the tenement area, Bleeding Heart Yard. As the title indicates, this is a very distressed area. The people of Bleeding Heart Yard are bled of all they earn by Pancks, the rent-collector, who is just a foil for Mr. Casby. The irony of Mr. Casby is that he is called the "Patriarch,"(146) for with his shining bald pate and the long flowing grey locks at the side, people could only remark: "'Oh! why, with that head, is he not a father to the orphan and a friend to the friendless!'"(146) As the aged and benevolent-appearing Father of the Bleeding Heart Yard family, it is he who actually demands payment. His "children" are useful to him only as economic resources.

In the society of *Little Dorrit*, to lose one's economic resources is to lose one's right to be a free part of the society.



Loss of money means certain imprisonment. "One is, as one has."

Losing his money, Mr. Dorrit, along with his family is incarcerated in the debtor's prison, the Marshalsea, and his case is lost in the foolscap of the Circumlocution Office. Having no money, Mr. Dorrit no longer exists to the world outside of the prison yard. Yet, within the prison, a hierarchy is established, and because of William Dorrit's long incarceration, and because of his assumed gentility, he becomes the Father of the Marshalsea.(221) By what criterion is he a true father? What authority does he exercise? None. Even within his family, his daughter becomes the head and he is subject to the jurisdiction of the turnkey's lock, and financially dependent upon the "testimonials" of former inmates, family and visitors.

That the various parental figures in *Little Dorrit* are grossly inadequate and dissembling is amply evident. How, then, do the "children" of these families react to these irresponsible and inadequate fathers? And, secondly, how does Dickens indict them? The parental or authority figures are all portrayed by Dickens as though they were already--before any final judgments or denouements of the novel are made--moribund or punished and incarcerated for their misdeeds. Consider Lord Decimus, whom Dickens describes in the image of choking. Of him, Dickens writes: "He wound and wound folds of white cravat round his neck, as he wound and wound folds of tape and paper round the neck of the country."(111) The eminent Lord, indeed, almost strangles himself as he, through his debilitating Circumlocution Office, attempts to enervate the country. Merdle, the economic idol of a materialistic society, constantly attempts to handcuff himself--an unconscious attempt to incarcerate himself--



while he is uncomfortably under the police surveillance of his own butler, the Avenging Spirit, who considers Merdle, rightly, not a true gentleman.

Mrs. Merdle, the high priestess of that abstraction, Society, exposes her bosom, not to nurse a child but to display her jewels. And what she is, is expressed by the parrot in the cage beside her which caws out its inanities in a manner parroting her own non-sensical societal decrees. The parrot cage is a miniature of that larger societal cage or prison. Mrs. Clennam reposes upon a bier-like sofa in her mausoleum-like house, a both physically and spiritually paralyzed woman. And while Mr. Merdle is afraid of his butler, so also with the Clennam household does the pattern of *serviteur* and served gradually become inverted, as Flintwinch the clerk assumes more authority and control. As an authority figure, he is also judged by Dickens. Dickens portrays him as a man who had appeared to have hanged himself by a neckcloth, and who has cut himself down. Mr. Casby, the dissembling Patriarch, is finally defathered symbolically by Pancks, who cuts off his hair and the brim of his hat. And the incarcerated Mr. Dorrit, who postures as a benevolent father-figure, in actuality has relinquished his authority because of his own ineffectualness to his youngest daughter, Amy. While Amy Dorrit is aware of her father's inadequacies--"I have never seen him in my life!"(231)--she does not rebuke him for his total inadequacies. The children, in *Little Dorrit*, are, indeed, long-suffering. They do not condemn the fathers; and although Dickens describes the fathers as moribund either through incarceration, castration, or choking, it is interesting to observe that he makes all the



imprisonments and the moribundity self-inflicted (with the exception of Dorrit's involuntary imprisonment). The society, in other words, does not condemn the authoritative, societal parents; they unconsciously condemn themselves. The society may be inadequately ruled by ineffectual fathers, but as a conservative Englishman, Dickens, like the rest of his society, is tremendously afraid of revolution. Hence, the only mention of parricide--and all revolution, or the usurpation of parental and existing authority is parricide--is that mouthed by the father William Dorrit, who, when admonishing his son Tip says: "'you had no right to make up your mind to what is monstrous, to what is--ha--immoral, to what is--hum--parricidal.'"(376) Dickens believes in amelioration achieved only within the existing societal and familial structures, and he argues for a continuing paternal society. Hence, at the end of the novel *Little Dorrit* and Arthur Clennam marry--the resumption of the family unit--and they resolve, as best as they can, to aid the rest of the economic family. And, therefore, Dickens would not subscribe to Shaw's contention that *Little Dorrit* is a more seditious book than *Das Kapital*.

While in *Little Dorrit* parricide is just an idle threat by a frustrated father, in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, the very basis of the novel is an analysis of the meaning and effects of parricidal thoughts and impulses directed against the various father figures in the novel.

In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky considers the crime of parricide on several levels. The parricidal impulses and the actual murder of "the old profligate, who had dropped all family ties"(88)--an irresponsible and reprehensible father--provide the



central focus of the novel. What is particularly evident in this delineating of the desire to murder the hated father is that Dostoevsky reiterates the *motif* often enough that parricide becomes an almost ominous physical presence in the novel. And, of course, the guilt at having parricidal impulses becomes manifest in Ivan as hallucinations, in which a shabby but genteel devil (linked to the physical world of the novel as a kind of medium between the murderer Smerdyakov and the self-vindicating Ivan) parrots and mocks Ivan's own moral pronouncements. For example, he reminds Ivan that his contention is that if there is no immortality of the soul, there is (because of no deterrent of divine sanction) no need for morality and "Everything in the world is lawful. . . ." (631) Why, therefore, does Ivan feel compelled to defend his brother at the trial, a moral act, in an amoral world? As an incidental comparison, there is a similarity between the almost physical sensation of parricidal impulses and the hallucinatory appearances of Ivan's devil revealing his guilt, and the creakings and whisperings of the guilt-infested Clennam household, in which Flintwinch's double (his evil-contriving brother) appears in the night. And Flintwinch's wife, Affery, hears the noises but cannot understand them. These sounds become, symbolically, auditory manifestations of guilt. The aura of violent parent-child tension is so permeating in *The Brothers Karamazov* that at the unfortunate gathering at the monastery, the Elder bows before Dmitri in acknowledgement of the son's forthcoming suffering in connection with his father's death. The threat of parricide is clearly apprehended by the saintly spiritual father.



The conflict between the old Fyodor and Dmitri is the classical Oedipal quarrel over the paternal inheritance and property. And, as Sigmund Freud observed in "Dostoevsky and Parricide," the struggle is between the son and the father over the love of the mother (represented in the novel by the kept woman, Grushenka, a kind of earth-mother figure) whom both father and son wish to possess.<sup>21</sup> When Fyodor is murdered, the much publicized dispute between father and son provides an understandable motive for the murder and good grounds for the accusation and condemnation of Dmitri as the murderer of his father, a murder which he desired but did not commit. Significantly, the motives which Dmitri has for murdering his father are universal ones. As the tormented Ivan cries at the trial, "Who does not desire his father's death?" (621)

However, at the trial both the Prosecution and the Defence attempt to understand the Karamazov parricide in their own ways, and although they attempt to analyze the Karamazov family, they fail to understand the significance of the murder, and they condemn the wrong man, never identifying Smerdyakov as the real murderer. Interestingly, the Prosecutor presents the Karamazov family in terms of a picture of his contemporary Russian society. He asserts the following:

What, after all, is this Karamazov family, which has gained such an unenviable notoriety throughout Russia? . . . it seems to me that certain fundamental features of the educated class of to-day are reflected in this family picture--only, of course, in miniature, 'like the sun in a drop of water.' Think of that unhappy, vicious, unbridled old man, who has met with such a melancholy end, the head of a family! . . . Let us remember, however, that he was a father, and one of the typical fathers of to-day. . . . Now for the children of this father, this head of a family . . . We've seen to-day in this court that there are still good impulses . . . that family feeling has not been destroyed. . . . (630-31)



The Karamazov family is then a likeness of present Russian life. And when the Prosecutor speaks of Dmitri he says this: "While his brothers seem to stand for 'Europeanism' and 'the principles of the people,' he seems to represent Russia *as she is*." (632) What is ironic is that the Prosecutor is so intent upon preserving the sanctity and the tradition of the individual family, and he condemns the one who stands for Russia as she is (Dmitri) while ignoring Smerdyakov, with whom Dostoevsky identifies the seeds of revolution. Smerdyakov has mercenary aims; he will destroy if it will satisfy his economic aspirations. Very significantly, however, Dostoevsky places the blame for the murder squarely upon Ivan who supplies Smerdyakov with the moral license to murder, just as some intellectuals were, during Dostoevsky's time, providing the moral permission to destroy the existing social order by revolution. Like Dickens, Dostoevsky feared revolution.

More universally what, for Dostoevsky, does parricide in the novel represent? First, it represents the disruption of a kind of order, the severing of human bonds, the advocacy of self-interest. And when Ivan asks the two primal familial questions "Am I my brother Dmitri's keeper?" (210) and "Who does not desire his father's death?" (621), he is affirming Dostoevsky's belief in universal guilt and complicity.

If parricide is considered on a temporal level, it also becomes a spiritual question in the novel. Ivan, with his rational "Euclidian understanding" (220) directs a trial against his Heavenly Father upon the charge of God's inadequacy as a parent. How can a just and loving God allow innocent children to suffer? In terms of



the importance of family questions, observe that in all the examples which Ivan cites against the suffering of innocent children, the pain upon the children is either inflicted by, or observed by the parents. Why, argues Ivan, further, should innocent children suffer for the sins of their guilty fathers? Unable rationally to solve his unanswerable question, Ivan "will most respectfully return Him the ticket"(222) and posit, as a viable substitute for a non-intervening deity, a totally responsible, humanitarian temporal father, the Grand Inquisitor. Richard Peace offers an illuminating interpretation of the role of the Grand Inquisitor when he writes the following:

there is another father-figure obsessing his mind. In the absence of God, Ivan has had to find his substitute in a figure who will embody that authoritarian paternalism, both religious and political, which man so craves. This nightmare of Ivan's rebellious intellect is The Grand Inquisitor. The Grand Inquisitor is *man*--the proud usurper of God's authority, and as a Machiavellian father-figure of the intellect, he stands in direct contrast to Zosima, the humble servant of God and spiritual father of Alesha.<sup>22</sup>

Considering the "Legend" with the precepts of a family in mind, it is discerned that the Grand Inquisitor is advocating the eternal subjection of mankind to the status of "pitiful children," (234) a term which he uses in repeated variation. By what principles does the Grand Inquisitor justify his adoption of a totalitarian state, his universal collectivism, to which mankind will voluntarily submit or relinquish their freedom? He bases his arguments upon the adoption of the three suggestions by Satan which Christ rejected in his Temptation in the Wilderness.

The fundamental precept--upon which the aged cardinal establishes his society--is to realize the utilitarian "greatest happiness" principle, that all men might be as happy as possible. According to



the cardinal, the chief aim of man is the attainment of happiness and the avoidance of unhappiness, the principle of pleasure realized.

But for the Grand Inquisitor happiness is possible only at the expense of loss of freedom. Why?

The basic premise of the Grand Inquisitor concerning the innate nature of man, is that man is born a rebel. To live in rebellion, however, has caused him undue suffering. The source of unhappiness is in the exercise of freedom and the agony of moral choices. If man suffers immense agonies because of his conscience, there are three powers which can hold his conscience captive. There are three powers--miracle, mystery, and authority--to which he will, voluntarily or readily, relinquish his freedom, and will, thereby, achieve happiness. These are the three Christ rejected in his Temptation by "the wise and dread spirit, the spirit of self-destruction and non-existence." (228) Although Christ offered man freedom, freedom is impossible because mankind cannot share. There will always be bickering over material possessions. As well, The Grand Inquisitor accuses Christ of preaching a faith that was possible for the "elect", but was too difficult for the masses. Hence, instead of Christ's freedom, the church (a totally secular totalitarian state) will offer mankind miracle, mystery, and authority.

The pattern that the church has adopted is exactly that which Christ rejected.

At the conclusion of the Grand Inquisitor's charge against him, Christ replies with no counter-arguments. He is silent. His only answer is to kiss the aged cardinal. What then undermines the argument of the Grand Inquisitor? Divine love, selfless love, the



very presence of Christ which refutes the belief of the Grand Inquisitor in his own unbelief. And, repeating the actions of Christ, Alyosha, the young Christian novitiate, turns to the creator of the Grand Inquisitor, his doubting, atheistic brother, Ivan, and kisses him. For Dostoevsky, the actions of Christ are repeated again and again. What Dostoevsky calls "active love" abnegates a program of submission. Brotherhood replaces an authoritarian paternalism.

Why, when confronted with the very presence of Christ, does the aged cardinal doggedly continue the program he has established? He has elevated his ethical scheme above that of Christ, and he is determined to abide by it. That his whole program for society has an ethical premise and a humanitarian end--the attainment of happiness for the masses of mankind--is obvious and unrepachable. He is convinced of the absolute integrity of his program, and he is convinced that he is acting with a purity of motives unbesmirched by the "simple lust of power, of filthy earthly gain, of domination." (236) However, his moral scheme breaks down in two areas. First, he is assured of the rightness of his actions, but what of the rest of humanity? He has decided a program for them which may not be of their own choosing. He has decided that it is happiness, that is, the absence of responsibility for making moral choices, the satisfaction of earthly wants, and the need for someone to worship which man most desires. But is the aim of man necessarily only happiness, or happiness on those terms? Secondly, although the Grand Inquisitor does have an ethical premise, he cannot enforce his program with impunity. For what does his ethical program entail? The sacrifice of the few for the saving of millions. How can he support a system



which maintains a motive of ethical rightness through unethical activity? His ethical ideals are executed by a program of terror and submission--the burning of heretics--based upon lies and deception, for the people are encouraged in a belief the leaders do not share. Of course, the Inquisitor attempts to justify his lies. The lies are a buffer for the people against the agonies of conscience and unbelief. Indeed, the lies of the church are the means by which the innocence of the masses will be maintained. For, by not making moral choices, man cannot be held responsible for his actions. The whole realm of ethics is placed under the jurisdiction of the church. What the Grand Inquisitor wishes to do is to assume responsibility for the masses; he wants to continue perpetually in his authoritative father role. Man, in his scheme of things, is to remain forever a child.

In such a program there can be no growth or progress, no creativity, no individuality, and, of course, no freedom. The result is a kind of stasis, a "living death." Dostoevsky wrote a very cogent commentary upon the Legend in a letter to his publisher, N. A. Linbimov of *Russky Vestnik*. He writes:

The modern *denier*, the most vehement one, straightway supports the advice of the devil, and asserts that that is a surer way of bringing happiness to mankind than Christ is. For our Russian socialism, stupid but terrible (for the young are with it)--there is here a warning, and I think a forcible one. Bread, the tower of Babel (i.e., [sic] the future kingdom of socialism) and the completest overthrow of freedom of conscience--that is what the desperate denier and atheist arrives at. The difference only being that our socialists (and they are not only the underground nihilists--you are aware of that) are conscious Jesuits and liars, who will not confess that their ideal is the ideal of the violation of man's conscience and of the reduction of mankind to the level of a herd of cattle. But my socialist (Ivan Karamazov) is a sincere man who frankly confesses that he agrees with the "Grand Inquisitor's" view of mankind and that Christ's religion (as it were) has raised man much higher than



man actually stands. The question is forced home: "Do you despise or respect mankind, you, its coming saviors?"

And they do all this in the name of the love of mankind, as if to say: "Christ's law is difficult and abstract, and for weak people intolerable", and instead of the law of liberty and Enlightenment they bring to mankind the law of chains and of subjection by means of bread.<sup>23</sup>

The Grand Inquisitor's principles of "miracle, mystery, and authority"(231) by which the organization of "a universal state"(233) can be accomplished are remarkably like John Stuart Mill's analysis of the three forces which ensure the continuance or permanence and cohesiveness of a particular society. The first principle of stability in a political society is, according to Mill, a system of education which acts as a restraining discipline which trains an individual to subordinate certain of his personal impulses and aims for "the ends of society."<sup>24</sup> This restraining power, remarks Mill, is "supplied principally by religious teaching,"<sup>25</sup> corresponding, therefore, to the cardinal's notion of miracle. The second condition of a durable society is that there be a feeling of allegiance or loyalty --something permanent which is not called into question. Mill advises that this "feeling may attach itself . . . to a common God or gods, the protectors and guardians of their State."<sup>26</sup> This relates to the Grand Inquisitor's idea of mystery, and partially explains why his totalitarian state, with its "sword of Caesar,"(233) retains the facade of a church. The third condition of a stable and permanent political society is "a strong and active principle of cohesion"<sup>27</sup> and unity. The Grand Inquisitor maintains that "the craving for universal unity is the third and last anguish of men."(233) Unity, in the cardinal's scheme, is accomplished by the authority of the quasi-church or universal state. Although only the third temptation



of the devil is that "the church [be] . . . transformed into a state," (63) the realization of the other two temptations makes the third possible. The important tenet of the cardinal is that the effecting of these three principles--miracle, mystery, and authority--is "all that man seeks on earth." (233) That is, he feels that the desire to organize or be part of a universal state is stronger than the personal questions of self-interest and individual liberty and, indeed, that "nothing has ever been more insupportable for a man and a human society than freedom." (228) With this, of course, the English Utilitarians would never have concurred. Self-interest and individual liberty are, for them, more essential than any adherence to a social contract, and should not if possible, be subordinated to the collective good of the state. Mill does admit that for the guarantee of liberty to all, a certain amount of liberty must be surrendered and coercion involved. For the Grand Inquisitor, on the other hand, the total relinquishing of personal liberty, self-interests, and the freedom of moral choices are necessary and, moreover, desired by mankind. Happiness, for man, is realized by "bread" or the satisfaction of his material wants, by having someone to keep his conscience for him, and by being part of a universal organization. Or, so the Grand Inquisitor outlines his "greatest happiness principle."

Dostoevsky is, in *The Brothers Karamazov*, quite concerned with the question of human happiness, but does Dostoevsky accept happiness on the Grand Inquisitor's terms? The kind of happiness which the Grand Inquisitor can realize has, according to Dostoevsky, as its chief results the destruction of man's consciousness and sense of self. Man, in the Grand Inquisitor's scheme, loses his essential



humanity and becomes, indeed, only a complacent animal--a "sheep" (232) or part of "one unanimous and harmonious ant-heap." (233)

Because the Grand Inquisitor has succeeded in obliterating human suffering, he has also destroyed man's humanity for "suffering is the sole origin of consciousness"<sup>28</sup> and without consciousness man is, indeed, just a piano key or the stop of an organ.

While the Grand Inquisitor accuses Christ of not desiring mankind's happiness--obvious, he feels, in Christ's rejection of the devil's three proposals in the Temptations in the Wilderness--is there any evidence in *The Brothers Karamazov* to indicate that Dostoevsky believed that Christ and happiness are not mutually exclusive? Although the death of the elder, Father Zossima, does not result in the hoped for miracle but, contrarily, becomes a testament of the Elder's mortality and corruptibility, with the manifest putrefaction of his corpse, yet, the young novitiate, Alyosha, has a vision of Father Zossima enjoying the miracle of the Marriage at Cana. From this vision it is evident to Dostoevsky that Christ did not reject miracles, for he changed the water to wine and thus satisfied man's material desires, and, more importantly, he wished to see men happy--even at the marriage feast. "It was not men's grief, but their joy Christ visited, He worked His first miracle to help men's gladness . . . 'He who loves men loves their gladness, too.' . . ." (326) And if the vision of the Marriage at Cana is Dostoevsky's reply to the attack of the Grand Inquisitor against Christ's supposed unconcern with mankind's happiness, Father Zossima is Dostoevsky's reply to the inadequacies of the Grand Inquisitor as a paternal figure in the novel. Father Zossima's "active living love" (292) and Christianity



are Dostoevsky's alternatives to the Grand Inquisitor's humanitarianism and atheistic humanism.

How do the Grand Inquisitor and the "Pater Seraphicus"(239) differ as paternal figures? The Grand Inquisitor wishes to have absolute and continuous authority, and mankind will remain "the thousand millions of happy children who have known no sin."(235) The price of continued innocence is eternal subjugation. He and the church leaders will assume moral responsibility so that the masses of humanity will not have to bear the burden of moral choices and the agonies of conscience. Father Zossima, as a father figure, is not so much an authoritative head as a religious advisor to his spiritual "child," Alyosha. And he advises Alyosha to leave the monastery and to go into the world to mature in Christian experience. Father Zossima asserts that "we are all responsible to all for all," (274) which is the antithetical kind of responsibility to the Grand Inquisitor's assertion that all responsibility shall be his own and the other church leaders. Father Zossima's program of regeneration for man is individual and personal as compared to the state-based humanitarianism of the Grand Inquisitor. Father Zossima's plan of world-wide renewal is as follows:

It's a spiritual, psychological process. To transform the world, to recreate it afresh, men must turn into another path psychologically. Until you have become really, in actual fact, a brother to every one, brotherhood will not come to pass.(274)

The realization of brotherhood--and it is discerned here that Father Zossima advocates not a patriarchal society but a fraternal one--comes from acting on the principle that "we are all responsible to all for all."(274)



It is in this area of human responsibility that a link between the world of *The Brothers Karamazov* and that of *Little Dorrit* is discerned. Dickens' original and ironic title for the novel was "Nobody's Fault." By this Dickens meant that the state of human society was everyone's responsibility. That the world of *Little Dorrit* is labyrinthine, is everyone's fault. If man is imprisoned by those very codes, institutions, and structures which he has created, supposedly for his own benefit and protection--the Circumlocution Office typifies this--yet, man must still be held responsible. And even the prison need not deter the individual from carrying out a fulfilled and beneficial existence. Thus, the paradox of *Little Dorrit* is that the ideal of the novel, Little Dorrit or the Good Samaritan of the society, has always been a resident, although not an actual inmate of the prison, and more surprisingly, she finds the Marshalsea a more acceptable environment than the "superior sort of Marshalsea" (511) of continental living.

Both *The Brothers Karamazov* and *Little Dorrit* are studies in freedom and imprisonment. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, imprisonment is, first, the enthrallment to the baser nature of man. Thus, Dostoevsky's characters speak about the "Karamazov baseness" (238) epitomized by the debauched father, Fyodor Karamazov, whose imprisonment is his inability to rise above his perverted and immoral sensuality. Dmitri Karamazov, inheritor of his father's base sensuality, is incarcerated in an actual prison after the murder of the hated father. And, of course, there is the voluntary abnegation of freedom in the society of the Grand Inquisitor. Ivan's legend is Dostoevsky's penetrating study of the price of earthly bread. For the satisfaction



of his material wants, man will readily give up his freedom. In *Little Dorrit*, Dickens observes as well that money or materialism, as well as position in society are, according to its citizens, "the keys to the kingdom." Instead of paradise, however, the kingdom may be a prison, as Merdle the buccaneer financial king clearly indicates. He is imprisoned in his own house, with his lackey as turnkey. Without money, imprisonment is inevitable. And, thus, the Dorrits spend twenty years incarcerated in the Marshalsea. And the Circumlocution Office itself is a labyrinth which desires no inmates but its administrators. Failing to solve his familial problems, unable to penetrate the labyrinthine Circumlocution Office, and unwisely investing Doyce's funds in the Merdle "bubble," losing all, Clennam goes to the debtor's prison as an inmate himself. Significantly, Clennam's imprisonment is self-imposed. Clennam, through this incarceration, wishes to atone for his own guilt and that of his family. Although Dmitri does not actually murder his hated father, he desired his death. Thus, he is guilty of parricidal impulses. To expiate for his own murderous instincts, he decides--at least temporarily--to accept his imprisonment. More importantly, Dmitri's dream about an innocent babe gives him an altruistic reason for submitting to his lot. A prerequisite for the relieving of guilt feelings is to have a vision of innocence. And freedom from bondage is achieved by turning away from self to a concern with the plight of others. For "brotherly love"(284) or unmitigated altruism begets true freedom. True liberty is achieved when freedom is no longer interpreted as "the multiplication and satisfaction of desires." (284) Filial



responsibility and a feeling of brotherhood lead to freedom. In like manner, Amy Dorrit carries out her filial duties towards her erring family.

It may be observed from a study of the worlds of the two novels that Ivan portrays the Grand Inquisitor using a religious structure to achieve a materialistic end. Conversely, in the world of *Little Dorrit*, the aspirations of its citizens are geared totally toward position in society and wealth, and these ends are sought with an almost religious zeal. For the citizens of the world of *Little Dorrit*, to achieve social status or wealth is to obtain salvation. The Circumlocution Office itself, as a concrete reality of the socio-political world of the novel is, according to the individuals who must deal with it, the only, if impossible, door to a kind of "spiritual" certainty and knowledge, and the only way through which the dreams and aspirations of the individuals may be realized. Thus Arthur Clennam, akin to K in Kafka's *The Castle*, goes to the Circumlocution Office as a kind of spiritual quester. To address such a search to this indifferent and ineffectual bureaucracy is, of course, an absurdity. Furthermore, the perversity of the various sycophantic parental figures in the novel is legion. While feigning to be benevolent priests or priestesses in their respective environments, they all bow before wealth and Society itself, posturing and feigning to be what they are not, adequate parents and fit citizens of their society. What is significant about "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" is that the material and religious realms are not inverted as in *Little Dorrit*, but rather the religious structure cloaks a totally materialistic society, and the



religious structure is just a means of making that materially-orientated organization effective and cohesive. Dostoevsky renounces the quasi-religious society of the Grand Inquisitor and advocates, in its place, a universalism based upon brotherhood and love. The precepts of Christ provide the only viable basis for a future spiritual society, a Christian apocalypse to be realized.

If the state has in every way frustrated or fettered the desires and impulses of the individual will--either through government institutions such as the Circumlocution Office or through the "religious" structure of which the Grand Inquisitor is a representative, or through the autocratic workings of individual families--there are in both *Little Dorrit* and *The Brothers Karamazov* fascinating examples of individuals (predominantly female) who have managed to escape from the tyrannies of their respective societies into an even greater tyranny which to them is freedom. Finding the world outside of themselves unacceptable or essentially unjust, for they feel themselves badly treated, they turn into themselves or to a world of total self, in which the only kind of life they do not condemn and can accept is of their own making. What they attempt to achieve is a kind of "negative transcendence." That is, the outer world--the societal world of human interrelationships and social intercourse--is only a means by which they can interpret their own beings and add to the pain and suffering within themselves. They increase their own sense of reality by perverting, rejecting, and criticizing the activities of others. In effect, they totally demean the world outside of themselves to maintain their own sense of superiority. Or, to make the world significantly their own, they may try to engulf another



individual--to totally possess him. Again the results are identical. Only the self is important; only the self is essentially real and justified. In brief, they are total egoists.

Because they deny or reject the world outside of themselves, they must make the self all-sufficient. Further, they wish to have a heightened sense of their own reality. The method by which they attempt to accomplish this is what Dickens calls tormenting the self, or what Dostoevsky terms "self-laceration"(170) or self-interested suffering. What these characters effect is a kind of self-induced suffering or torture, a sado-masochism. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky presents self-lacerations as a universal phenomenon found in the monastery, the cottage, the open air, as well as in the drawing room. Ivan Karamazov, the arm-chair humanist--a lover of humanity at the aesthetic distance of his "Legend"--defines Christian charity, that is, loving one's neighbours as a form of self-laceration, as a "falsity, for the sake of the charity imposed on him." (214) For Ivan "to love a man, he must be hidden, for as soon as he shows his face, love is gone." (214) In truth, he cannot love, and as Father Zossima explains it, he is, therefore, in hell, for "hell is the inability to love." (293) Essentially, this is the basic characteristic of the self-tormentors in both novels. Secondly, the presentation of the various self-tormentors invalidates the universality of the "pleasure principle," that is, of happiness always being the absence of pain or suffering. For the self-tormentors, a perverted sense of happiness and pleasure is received from pain and self-torture. As an extreme example of a self-lacerator, the young Lise in *The Brothers Karamazov* confesses this: "I should like someone to torture me--



I don't want to be happy . . . I want disorder."(524) Yet, she seems to be perversely happy slamming her finger in a door or contemplating a crucifixion while eating pineapple compote.

The two most complexly developed lacerators in the novels are Miss Wade, who writes "The History of a Self Tormentor," in Dickens, and Katerina Ivanovna in *The Brothers Karamazov*. Miss Wade was an illegitimate child. Always mindful of her orphan status, she perverts and twists any charitable acts directed toward her, for she feels that her associates are merely pitying her. How then do the family relationships and ties relate to her lacerations? Miss Wade attempts to attribute the whole of her miserable state to the all too real and harsh facts of her illegitimate, and hence, unwanted birth. She constantly alludes to her birth and to the fact that she has no family. In her "History" she writes:

I was told I was an orphan. There was no other orphan among us; and I perceived (here was the first disadvantage of not being a fool) that they conciliated me in an indolent pity, and in a sense of superiority.(663)

Or again, she writes:

I learned that I had no grandmother and no recognized relation. I carried the light of that information both into my past and into my future. It showed me many new occasions on which people triumphed over me, when they made a pretence of treating me with consideration, of doing me a service.(665)

It should be stressed here, therefore, that the absence of social position and family is central to her problem. Katerina Ivanovna, on the other hand, is born to a socially prominent family; social position is not, as a consequence, a motivating influence in her lacerations. And the desire to save her father from financial ruin by accepting money from Dmitri is merely a starting point in her lacerations.



What is very similar in these two women is their need to "anatomize the wretched people around us,"(670) (Miss Wade's phrase) to analyze their associates, and, if possible, to outwit them. These women must not feel dominated, and, therefore, they must constantly make the next movement of their life or their next activity one which other people have not anticipated, thus keeping themselves free.

Secondly, the exercise of the laceration gives the women a ruling principle, or something for which to live. Miss Wade's illegitimacy and orphaned state become her ruling principle, just as she makes them Tattycoram's. To this young novitiate of self-torture, Miss Wade admonishes: "Your birth you know; you must not forget your birth."(328) When in *The Brothers Karamazov* Dmitri gives Katerina the needed money without conditions (presumably without the loss of her chastity), and because he rejects her for the kept woman, Grushenka, Katerina then claims, "I will never, never abandon him!" (172) She will, she affirms, become like a sister "who loves him and has sacrificed all her life for him."(172) Ivan offers this explanation of the meaning of Katerina's decision to dedicate her whole life to the sustaining of this one moment of rejection:

. . . in any one else this moment would be only due to yesterday's impression and would be only a moment. But with Katerina Ivanovna's character, that moment will last all her life. What for any one else would be only a promise is for her an everlasting, burdensome, grim, perhaps, but unflagging duty. And she will be sustained by the feeling of this duty being fulfilled. Your life, Katerina Ivanovna, will henceforth be spent in painful brooding over your own feelings, your own heroism, and your own suffering; but in the end that suffering will be softened and will pass into sweet contemplation of the fulfilment of a bold and proud design.(173)

Katerina's decision to make this one "moment" her *raison d'être* is an inversion of Goethe's idea of a "*Höchster Augenblick*," or



moment of intensest living. Katerina's "moment," instead of being directed away from herself for the benefit of others as in Goethe's conception, is solely towards herself. It is the event which she can use to torture herself and, thereby, maintain a consciousness of self. And while Faust's scheme of a "paradise terrestrial" is envisioned just before death, Katerina's "moment" is destructive and death-like even though she continues to live. In Katerina's determination to keep on remembering that one incident in her life, she calls to mind the figure of Miss Havisham in *Great Expectations*, who makes her jilting by her lover at twenty minutes before nine the last and only significant moment of her life.

Interestingly, both Katerina's and Miss Wade's torments develop through the question of a charitable act. Dmitri performs an act of charity by giving Katerina the needed money without stipulations. He behaves virtuously towards her when her virtue is in danger of being lost. His virtue defeats hers or is greater than hers. Henceforth, she must keep her virtue in mind. Her virtue must constantly exceed his. Her "pretended love of Dmitri from some fancied duty of gratitude"(170)--her sham charity--is a pose or a means by which she will as she says: "gain my point."(172) Her proposed self-sacrifice is not an act of love, but an act of pride. She must prove that her charity and self-sacrifice exceed his. By his constant debasements and debaucheries for which he is known, her virtue will be thrown into ever greater relief.

Similarly, whenever Miss Wade's associates act kindly towards her, she perverts this charity and interprets it as condescension



and pity, for she, too, is dominated by pride. She cannot feel that she is lower than or inferior to others. Like Katerina, she too must prove her point, hers being that there is no charity, only condescension; no camaraderie or feeling of belonging for orphans but only patronage; no love but only simpering pity and feigned charity.

Another interesting similarity between the two is that they are unable to recognize real affection or to accept it, and they cannot reciprocate affection. Dmitri, Katerina's supposed beloved says of her, "She loves her own *virtue*, not me." (109) The saintly Alyosha remarks of Katerina that she is "playing a part--as in a theatre!" (174) And her love for Dmitri, part of her histrionics, is an unreal love--an illusion--of which Katerina has persuaded herself. "Love" for Katerina can mean only the creation of pain either self-inflicted, the receiving of pain, or the inflicting of pain upon others. The ultimate direction of love is towards self; it is, indeed, self-love. For Miss Wade, to be loved means to receive pain as well. And the sources of pain are also in her self-lacerations for she misconstrues, distorts, and perverts all the affection she receives. Of her former lover, Miss Wade writes this:

For, I did love him once. Undeserving as he was, and little as he thought of all these agonies that it cost me--agonies which should have made him wholly and gratefully mine to his life's end--I loved him . . . While I have sat in his presence recalling all my slights and wrongs, and deliberating whether I should not fly from the house at once and never see him again--I have loved him. (668)

The proffering of love is ultimately rejected by Miss Wade, for she cannot accept love, but must turn it into something much more resembling hate.



In their self-commiseration, their warped sense of injured justice, their pride, their transformation of love into hatred, and in their deliberate self-punishments, Katerina and Miss Wade are indeed analogous characters. In her outward behavior Miss Wade is very detached and calculating. Katerina, on the other hand, is a volatile and vacillating woman subject to infinite bouts of hysterics and impulses who succeeds by her play-acting principally in duping herself. That they are both negative exemplars of the dictum that "true freedom is not to be in bondage to oneself" is amply evident. Self-laceration is truly a manifestation of a being wholly enthralled in its own immanence and exigencies. In a moral sense, for Miss Wade and Katerina self-lacerations are attempts at self-vindication, the maintenance of assumed, but not actual innocence. To assure the continuance of their own sense of unculpability and innocence, they must make their associates the guilty ones. Hence, at Dmitri's trial, it is Katerina who, in order to appear wholly virtuous, presents the incriminating letter which pronounces Dmitri ill-foundedly guilty and which damns him. Miss Wade is excruciatingly conscious of the injustices and evils of others, but oblivious of her own monstrous enthrallment of the young Tattycoram.

Approaching *The Brothers Karamazov* with the ethical considerations of family life in mind, it may be observed that, at the beginning of "Pro and Contra," Ivan says, "Am I my brother Dmitri's keeper? . . . Cain's answer about his murdered brother, wasn't it?" (210) Ivan will not accept his own complicity and involvement in the events that are leading towards his own father's death. And the only way that he can come to terms with this question of filial



responsibility on a universal level is to have his brother, that is, mankind in general, kept by the Grand Inquisitor. He will also continue to argue that because there is no God and no immortality, there is no sin, and, hence, no guilt and responsibility. And so he will argue until "the stinking lackey"(204) Smerdyakov and his own "daimon" prove him wrong. When Ivan has hallucinations of a crass and shallow-minded devil visiting him, his ethical rationalism and his own personal belief that "there are none guilty; that cause follows effect, simply and directly"(220) are questioned and, ultimately, invalidated. Ivan's devil--"a paltry, trivial devil"(590)--is what Ivan confesses as "the incarnation of myself, but only of one side of me . . . of my thoughts and feelings, but only the nastiest and stupidest of them."(587) The devil makes a mockery of Ivan's "all things are lawful"(587) by pointing out to Ivan that he should not be thinking of defending his brother and sacrificing himself, as well as experiencing guilt, if there is no morality.

What the devil represents, then, in general terms, is expressed by Ivan himself when he suggests the following: "I think if the devil doesn't exist, but man has created him, he has created him in his own image and likeness."(216) That is, the devil is a reflection of himself. Ivan's hallucinatory devil undermines his belief in the absolute efficacy of reason to come to terms with the human predicament, both by the devil's presence and by his crass pronouncements. Tantamountly, the devil makes conscious Ivan's unacknowledged guilt and complicity in his father's murder. In like manner, Dickens, in *Little Dorrit* presents the devilish Blandois (alias Rigaud or Lagnier) to divulge fully the spiritual bankruptcy of a wholly sham and



materialistic society. Blandois reveals to the readers the magnitude of the self-interest and desire for privilege and wealth which characterize the quests of the citizens of *Little Dorrit*. Blandois is the farthest point upon a moral continuum in the novel, the extreme of immorality and absolute depravity.

Dostoevsky's and Dickens' devils are analogous characters. The basic principle by which these devils operate is that of self-interest, although Ivan's devil dissimulates interest in other men, and pretends to desire their good.

Secondly, both devils embody the manifest importance of societal position, for they both adopt the stance of a gentleman. Ivan's hallucinatory demon is "a Russian gentleman of a particular kind"(574) whose goal is expressed by himself thus: "My dear friend, above all things I want to behave like a gentleman and to be recognized as such . . . Now I only prize the reputation of being a gentlemanly person. . . ." (577) Similarly, the "cosmopolitan gentleman"(9) Blandois, in *Little Dorrit* outlines his life style when he asserts: "A gentleman I am, a gentleman I'll live, and a gentleman I'll die! It's my intent to be a gentleman. It's my game. Death of my soul, I play it out wherever I go!" (9) Theatrics and role playing are their games. Accordingly, because of their assumed gentlemanly roles--remembering, of course, that Ivan's devil is only "x in an indeterminate equation," (581) and Blandois hovers as a very real demon on the periphery of the world of *Little Dorrit*--they feel that they must be served. Hence, they cannot serve others, and here, too, their similarity to the central characters of both novels is revealed as well.



The name which Rigaud or Blandois adopts is French and he sings French songs. Ivan's devil gives French aphorisms and his manner is also French. What significance has this? Blandois and Ivan's devils are subversives, willing, for their own comforts and illusions, to destroy anyone or anything that impedes their own advancements. As such, they evoke the revolutionaries of France, except that they have no cause but their own. Ivan's hallucination will "ruin thousands for the sake of saving one,"(586) himself. And so the presumed and lofty ethics of Ivan crumble under the weight of his demon's egotistic pronouncement. Ivan, who poses the unsolvable problem of whether one is capable of destroying one child to save the world, and subscribes to the view that he could sacrifice the few for the saving of millions in his "Legend," is, by his hallucination, confronted with the truth of his "ethics." He would sacrifice all to save or help himself. Ivan attempted to put God, the Heavenly Father, on trial in order to "settle the eternal questions"(211) of guilt and responsibility. At the end of the examination of inquiring, Ivan (erring man), not God, is tried and condemned. While posturing as a "citizen of the world,"(350) Blandois is merely an insubstantial blackmailer, a prison inmate almost mobbed by the masses who detest him outside the prison in Marseilles.

What is particularly significant about the author's conceptions of both these devils is that these self-gratifying, self-interested and feigning demons are literal embodiments of evil, but, more specifically, the kinds of evil which are produced by a high degree of civilization. Blandois contrasts, somewhat, with the devil in *Great Expectations*--Orlick--who is to be found in the corner of the



forge and in the swamps. Evil, as manifested in Orlick, is something primordial and non-reasoning. Blandois and Ivan's devil use the masks of civilization to disguise, if they can, their total depravity.<sup>29</sup> But Blandois' mask of assumed gentility really does not disguise his criminality. He haunts inns, repulses all his associates, and ultimately is destroyed in the collapse of the forbidding and guilt-ridden Clennam home.

In a world of universal guilt, pervaded by ever present manifestations of the diabolical and demonic--in which the individuals turn to materialism, status, or a belief in the total efficacy of reason, all principles which cannot sustain them--wherein, then, can an ameliorated world be achieved and its individuals transformed? The imprisoning and inadequate world is principally of the fathers' making. But it is the children who inherit the world, and it is they who must assume responsibility for its present state. Thus Arthur Clennam, so conscious of some past error in his parents' lives, must move from an inherited state of willessness, of a feeling of non-entity (Dickens refers to him as "Nobody" repeatedly) to a knowledge that "Nobody" is really everyone.<sup>30</sup> He (or everyone) must assume responsibility for the state of the world. Clennam chooses to concretize and then alleviate his own sense of guilt by entering the Marshalsea as a prisoner. He attempts to expiate for his own errors and the sins of his family by his voluntary incarceration. Similarly, Dmitri becomes a kind of surrogate criminal for the rest of society in *The Brothers Karamazov*. He accepts the punishment for the guilt which all of society experiences--"Who doesn't desire his father's death?" (621) cries the guilt-stricken son, Ivan. But



because Dmitri has a dream of an innocent babe, he decides to accept his fate without resistance, even though he is not his father's murderer.

It can be observed that the child has a central place in Dostoevsky's novel. Ivan cannot accept God's universe because of the suffering of innocent children, but he, personally, will not become involved in their plight. Dmitri has a dream of a suffering child and he is tremendously moved. He uses this dream as a means of coming to terms with his own condition, but he is not concerned with *how* to alleviate the suffering of children. It is Alyosha, the third son, who will assume this responsibility. It is he who will care for children and love them. Similarly, it is Amy Dorrit--a kind of child herself--who exhibits love and compassion and carries out her own responsibilities and those of her father and sister Fanny in *Little Dorrit*. Amy Dorrit and Alyosha negate the immorality of Ivan's devil and Blandois. The evil of the devils is mitigated by the angelic goodness of Amy and Alyosha; their innocence and benevolence cancel the guilt and evil of the other malevolent characters in the novels as well. Manifesting Christian charity, Amy Dorrit and Alyosha do not condemn their fathers, although they are the diametric opposites to their fathers. Whereas their fathers are selfish, they are selfless. While the rest of society attempts to advance its own interests, Alyosha and Little Dorrit work towards the happiness of others. It is Little Dorrit who helps bring about Clennam's renewal from his "sickness unto death" through her love; it is she who is the head and supporter of her father's family. And together with her husband Clennam, they will achieve "a modest life



of usefulness and happiness"(826)--the family vindicated and upheld. And in *The Brothers Karamazov*, Alyosha organizes the group of boys into a miniature brotherhood--the beginning, Dostoevsky hopes, of a more encompassing fraternity.



### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Matthew Arnold, "Dover Beach," line 37, rpt. in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, II, ed. M. H. Abrams, p. 905.

<sup>2</sup>Respecting John Stuart Mill's careful enunciation of how the greater pleasures are intellectual, cultural, and moral, Thomas Carlyle's charge of Utilitarianism being a "pig philosophy" is not altogether tenable.

<sup>3</sup>G. M. Young, *Portrait of an Age*, p. 150.

<sup>4</sup>Quoted by John Forster in his *Life of Dickens*, II, p. 387.

<sup>5</sup>I am thinking particularly of his reversal of his views on penology as he matured.

<sup>6</sup>Quoted by Humphry House in *Dickens World*, p. 172.

<sup>7</sup>This, and all subsequent quotations are taken from The New Oxford Illustrated Dickens Series.

<sup>8</sup>Slavophilism and Westernism were ideologies which developed in the 1840's in Russia.

<sup>9</sup>A fascinating commentary upon the attitude of Russia towards the West is the following by Arnold Toynbee:

It will be evident that this sense of orthodoxy and sense of destiny, which have been taken over by the Russians from the Byzantine Greeks, are just as characteristic of the present Communist regime in Russia as they were of the previous Eastern Orthodox Christian dispensation there. Marxism is, no doubt, a Western creed, but it is a Western creed which puts the Western civilization "on the spot"; and it was, therefore, possible for a twentieth-century Russian whose father had been a nineteenth-century "Slavophil" and his grandfather a devout Eastern Orthodox Christian to become a devoted Marxian without being required to make any reorientation of his inherited attitude towards the West. For the Russian Marxian, Russian Slavophil, and Russian Orthodox Christian alike, Russia is "Holy Russia," and the Western world of the Borgias and Queen Victoria, Smiles' Self-Help and Tammany Hall, is uniformly heretical, corrupt, and decadent. From *Civilization on Trial and The World and The West*, pp. 154-155.

<sup>10</sup>"The Pushkin Address," rpt. in *Russian Intellectual History: An Anthology*, ed. Marc Raeff, pp. 289-300.

<sup>11</sup>Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Constance Garnett, p. 63.



<sup>12</sup>Observe this passage in *The Brothers Karamazov* which clearly indicates that Dostoevsky believed that certain churches had become secular states rather than religious structures. Dostoevsky writes that "in many cases there are no churches there at all for . . . the churches themselves have long ago striven to pass from Church into State and to disappear in it completely." (62)

<sup>13</sup>It proved that the peasants were more interested in land than in politics.

<sup>14</sup>Quoted by Avrahm Yarmolinsky in *Dostoevsky: His Life and Art*, p. 393.

<sup>15</sup>Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, II., p. 753. I have substituted the word "accidental" for "casual" which is employed originally, for Donald Fanger explains that it is more accurate.

<sup>16</sup>Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Notebooks for The Brothers Karamazov*, ed. and trans. Edward Wasiolek, p. 101.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>18</sup>Charles Dickens, "The Great Baby," *Household Words*, 1855.

<sup>19</sup>Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present*, p. 140.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup>Sigmund Freud, "Dostoevsky and Parricide," rpt. in René Wellek's *Dostoevsky: A Collection of Critical Essays*, pp. 98-112.

<sup>22</sup>Richard Peace, *Dostoyevsky: An Examination of the Major Novels*, p. 258.

<sup>23</sup>Quoted in Miriam Sajakovic, *Dostoevsky: His Image of Man*, pp. 91-92.

<sup>24</sup>John Stuart Mill, *On Bentham and Coleridge*, p. 121.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>28</sup>Fyodor Dostoevsky, "Notes from Underground," rpt. in *The Short Novels of Dostoevsky*, p. 153.

<sup>29</sup>Something should be said about the artistic expression of demonism. Both Dickens and Dostoevsky have striven to give the devils an authenticity (thus, stressing the reality of evil) by presenting them in ways which very specifically tie them to the physical world. Rigaud, of course, despite his role-playing, theatrical airs,



devilish aphorisms, and demonic appearance *is* an actual character in the novel, a character with soft, effeminate white hands and a red beard. Ivan's devil, while actually an hallucination, is so real appearing that Ivan cannot determine his reality or unreality. In his *Notes* Dostoevsky reminds himself to give the devil characteristics --such as warts--which authenticate his physical appearance. And in the novel, he has him being plagued by rheumatism, and to have been inoculated twice, physical sufferings which the devil has consciously assumed to become more human appearing and circumscribed.

<sup>30</sup>Two chapter headings are "Nobody's Weakness"(187) and "Nobody's Fault."(200)



## CHAPTER III

### DEATH AND RESURRECTION

'That corpse you planted last year in your garden,  
'Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?  
T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*

*Our Mutual Friend* (1864-5), Dickens' bleakest and last completed novel, and *Crime and Punishment* (1866), the first novel of Dostoevsky's mature period, developed from the authors' awareness that the individuals in their respective societies were facing an encroaching annihilation, dehumanization, or mechanization.<sup>1</sup> Dickens was conscious of the dehumanization of Victorian citizens wrought by a new industrial society in which "factory hands," represented by such characters as Stephen Blackpool in *Hard Times* and Lizzie Hexam, the "female waterman, turned factory girl" of *Our Mutual Friend*, were machines judged by their efficiency.<sup>2</sup> Poorhouses, founded in the name of charity, and reformed by the Poor Laws of 1834, were such hopeless and demoralizing places that Betty Higden, in the present novel, flees from them as though she were escaping from an enemy worse than death. Likewise, the Ragged Schools of the working classes were inadequate, teaching the young pupils a kind of "Polyanna" morality, inconsistent with the harsh social realities of poverty, ignorance, interminable working days, and illness which defined their home environment.<sup>3</sup> And if the young scholars took their curriculum of Facts offered by the schools seriously, they could turn into creatures without inner lives like the young Gradgrinds



of *Hard Times*, or so mechanical that their inner beings were totally repressed, like the schoolmaster, Bradley Headstone, in the present novel. Headstone is also excruciatingly class conscious. Dickens was very aware of the rigidity of social categories and the monotonous conformity to social rituals. When Mortimer Lightwood and Eugene Wrayburn become conscious of the tedium and absurdity of their lives within privileged but tightly circumscribed lives, they can find no way out of their confinement. They realize that they are fops or dandys--individuals whose only identity is in their outward appearance and in the circumstances of their daily routine.

In a similar vein, Dostoevsky was also aware of the poverty and deprivation attributable to a widening urbanization. The St. Petersburg of *Crime and Punishment* is no less a dismal and oppressive city than is the London of *Our Mutual Friend*.<sup>4</sup> Whereas Dickens saw the "death in life" of its citizens topically as initially attributable to inadequate institutions, and to brutal social ethics, Dostoevsky created *Crime and Punishment* as a response to the political and social ideologies of his day. Thus, Raskolnikov is presented by Dostoevsky as a young nihilist--one of that popular movement of the 1860's which preached the abolition of all existing political and social structures and the denial of the then present morality. And in Raskolnikov, Dostoevsky portrayed the total spiritual emptiness and futility of nihilism. *Crime and Punishment* is also Dostoevsky's reply to the various versions of socialism propounded, during this time, for a future Russia.<sup>5</sup> For Dostoevsky, socialism, with its disregard for the "living soul," is a supreme dehumanization, for without individual freedom, there can be no significant life.<sup>6</sup> While the utopias of



the socialists had not yet been actualized with their various tyrannies, in *Crime and Punishment* Dostoevsky presented his own version of the oppression, the restrictions of freedom, and the deprivation which were the results of the structuring of his existing society and the nature of its citizens. Both *Crime and Punishment* and *Our Mutual Friend* can be studied as responses to a multi-level dehumanization.<sup>7</sup>

The characters in both novels measure themselves and are measured in relation to various kinds of death or unreality, and against the artificiality of the existing social structures that attempts to reduce them to a series of artificial layers, or to abstractions, and abstraction is, itself, a form of death. The problem of the characters, then, is how to come to terms with the death and unreality which surround them, which they absorb but also help to create. And if they feel in some measure "dead" in their world, or more horrifically within their own immanence, is a resurrection possible? Upon what terms is a renewal of self realizable? Are death and moribundity related to criminality?

In attempting to achieve a satisfying existence, certain characters in the novels often impinge on the very being, life, or property of others. To attempt to live is to "step over the barriers" (CP 316, 402) between the allowable and the unpermitted. Action becomes a violation of the permitted either in terms of societal rules and laws, or in terms of universal sanctions. The death and moribundity which surround the characters (expressed as landscape and social situation or environment) are symbolic expressions of the characters' own moral depravity and spiritual emptiness, but



secondly, the actual results of immoral activities.<sup>8</sup> Action means the incurrence of sin or crime.

Because criminal activities provide a chief movement in both *Our Mutual Friend* and *Crime and Punishment*, it is imperative to understand exactly how Dickens and Dostoevsky define crime. In *Crime and Punishment*, the English translation of the Russian word, *prestuplenie*, is inconclusively given as "crime." But in Russian, *prestuplenie* means literally "a stepping across" or "a stepping over," more approximately equivalent to the English word "transgression."<sup>9</sup> In Russian, *prestuplenie* connotes the process of crime; in English, "crime" denotes only its illegality. Dostoevsky, in *Crime and Punishment*, probes all the possibilities and paradoxes of this concept of "crossing the barriers." For the murderer, Raskolnikov, self-realization, or the differentiation of the self from the "whole ant-heap"(317) requires "stepping over the barriers"(402) between the allowable and the unpermitted, and although he allows the illegality of what he does according to the laws of his society, he refuses to acknowledge that his murder is anything more than an abstract concept. Crime, for Dostoevsky, as Donald Fanger phrases it, "becomes the tragedy of overstepping the proper bounds of intellect by taking it alone as a sanction."<sup>10</sup> And again,

his punishment and his hopes for salvation come through the discovery that intellect is insufficient, that it cannot prevent moral suffering, that the holiness of life is a fact impermeable to reason.<sup>11</sup>

Dostoevsky makes the novel, then, a delineation of how Raskolnikov moves from a definition of crime as a "principle," as a reasoned idea, to a consciousness of its meaning in terms of actual human life.



Raskolnikov kills an old woman and her sister, not an idea. Murder, for Dostoevsky, is, therefore, a violation of man's essential humanity --both that of the victims and that of the murderers--and not just a movement from what is legal to what is illegal. In *Our Mutual Friend*, Dickens approaches the nature of crime in a way that quite closely approximates that of "crossing the barriers." For the novel presents a collection of human scavengers not only stealing the property of others, but trespassing upon the very life of the characters. And the dehumanization which incurs through scavenging, that is, through a "stepping across," involves, therefore, the loss of humanity of both subject and object, murderer and victim. And the plot, like that of *Crime and Punishment*, evolves from murder--the Harmon murder and the attempted murder of Eugene Wrayburn by Bradley Headstone--and Dickens examines its meaning both from the point of view of perpetrator and victim.

Dickens conceives of criminality in terms of scavenging and predatory activities. The same idea is implicit in Dostoevsky's novel in which he develops a pattern of reciprocal predatory activity between Raskolnikov and the money-lender, Elena Ivanovna. What the pawnbroker appears to be to Raskolnikov is explained by Edward Wasiolek in his *Dostoevsky: The Major Fiction*:

For him she represents the heart of the corrupt society against which he revolts. Her image is almost mythic: a kind of female Minotaur devouring the prey of society until a white knight is able to destroy her.<sup>12</sup>

In her greed, and her ability to enthrall others through the manipulation of money, she is a manifest symbol of the acquisitive principle. By killing her, and by taking her money and trinkets, Raskolnikov is



not trying to restore the balance between the "haves" and the "have nots," for although Raskolnikov needs money it has very little importance to him. If greed and the expectation of financial advancement were the goading impulses in his crime, Raskolnikov would need only to steal and not to kill as well. Furthermore, once Raskolnikov kills the woman and robs her, he does not even count the money which he obtains. He hides the money and it concerns him no longer.

Choosing this money-lender as his victim is just Raskolnikov's way of rationalizing his deed. Her total depravity and corruption make his action seem less offensive, or so he feels. The essential link that Dostoevsky establishes between them is not, then, a mutual greed, but the fact that they are both predators. And Raskolnikov must come to see that his predatory activity is more reprehensible than hers, for he looks for life not just property.

If the object of Raskolnikov's predatory activity then is not money, the opposite is true in *Our Mutual Friend* where the supreme goal of the scavengers is the attainment of wealth. Dickens clearly saw that his society's most pervasive desire was for wealth, and he recognized that a society in which the ideal of money predominates, will, necessarily, become an acquisitive one. Man, in his unrelenting search for wealth, loses his moral consciousness. Losing his ethical sense, he loses his humanity as well. For Dickens human nature is defined by moral categories. To be truly human, man must be basically good; otherwise, he is subhuman, a bird of prey, a vermin, a rat, or one of the other versions of predators inhabiting the "Dismal Swamp" (212) of London. In the novel, the goal of man's rapacious hunt is embodied in the Harmond dust mounds, or garbage dumps, which are worth



vast fortunes, a portion of which many characters in the novel would like, by any means possible, to possess. Man's aim is for wealth, but wealth, like that of the dust heaps, may be refuse. And garbage has no intrinsic value. While seeking wealth in greed, man trespasses the barriers, and steals the property, or impinges upon the well-being of others, and he loses his humanity; he is, therefore, "dead-in-life." Dickens' equation of greed, money and death, in *Our Mutual Friend*, recalls to mind Chaucer's "The Pardoner's Tale."<sup>13</sup> There, the three greedy and riotous rogues jestingly seek death but find money which becomes death after all. *Radix malorum est Cupiditas* admonishes the dissembling but worldly-wise Pardoner, and with that Dickens concurs.<sup>14</sup>

A kind of metamorphosis of man into a sub-human species occurs in *Crime and Punishment* as well, wherein the images employed are principally of various insects, notably lice, moths, and spiders. However, an important distinction between Dickens' and Dostoevsky's conceptions of this dehumanization must be made. The difference lies in the modes of perception. For Dostoevsky, this reduction of mankind occurs only in the mind of the criminals, Svidrigaylov and Raskolnikov. It is only in Svidrigaylov's mind that eternity is conceived of as a bathhouse full of spiders, a metaphor which Igmarr Bergmann uses a century later in *Through a Glass Darkly*. Raskolnikov's vision of himself as a "moth flying into the candle of itself"(236) is only his own consciousness of himself. It is only in Raskolnikov's eyes that the pawnbroker is a human vermin or a louse. Because Raskolnikov has "crossed over the barriers" and isolated himself from humanity by his crime, he has also, according to Dostoevsky, divorced himself from all life and reality. When he looks at the pawnbroker he sees



a "useless, vile, pernicious louse." (399) Telling Sonya that he considers the money-lender as a louse, Sonya replies horrified, "A human being a louse!" (399) Elena Ivanovna is not an insect but a human life. What he sees, therefore, is an illusion. Raskolnikov has lost, through crime, his sense of reality. And after Raskolnikov has committed the crime, he is conscious of a "deadness" around him. For Dostoevsky, what the character perceives of his environment is an expression of his soul or being. By the murderer's crime, he has not only extinguished the lives of others but his own as well. The world around him is alive, but it is dead for Raskolnikov, and so, indeed, is he.

The effects of criminality and the reduction of man into something unhuman or animalistic operates differently in Dickens' novel. When a character is criminal or diabolical, he loses his humanity, and he becomes, as it were, a kind of shell or "hollow man," because his being is emptied out of himself into the world of his immediate surroundings. His environment is transformed and animated by his lost humanity, and usually, the criminal or guilty characters are not totally conscious of this grotesque fairy-tale transformation. Hence, the preying Gaffer Hexam returns to his home to ask, "Have we got a pest in the house? Is there summ'at deadly sticking to my clothes? What's let loose upon us? Who loosed it?" (76) His latent criminality exists as an ominous and disturbing reality just on the periphery of his own consciousness, and in his external environment. And it is usually clearly apprehended by all his associates.

Gaffer Hexam, who is likened to "a bird of prey" (3) and whose corpse-hunting competitor, Riderhood, describes him by saying



he is "like the vultures,"(4) and Rogue Riderhood, "a water-rat" or "vermin,"(170) who search the river for corpses and lucrative profit, are such acquisitive scavengers, and for both their predating activities lead them to premature, untimely deaths. But Dickens was also very aware that within the select circle of respectable society there are the most contemptible "birds of prey" of all. Alfred and Sophronia Lammle are newly married predators who, having once swooped down upon each other in the hope of financial gain and finding none, decide to dissimulate and prey together upon the rich members of society in a mutual pursuit of fortune. More horrifically, the social scavengers are not always content to hunt out only the avails of the corporate body of society, that is, to acquire "shares." (114) They have no moral inhibitions about attempting to acquire individuals as monetary assets. Alfred Lammle, described appropriately in Mephistophelean terms, schemes to own the hapless Georgiana Podsnap as property to sell for 1,000 pounds to the most noxious and dissembling financial scavenger of all, Fascination Fledgeby.

Death and dehumanization are the ultimate results of rapacious action and immoral living in *Our Mutual Friend*, but Dickens also believes that life in polite society is essentially insubstantial, for the very structures and activities of that society are artificial, lifeless, and sham. In society, man is just an abstraction. *Our Mutual Friend* ends with a cacophony of disembodied voices, the only reality remaining to the characters Dickens created. The sham and artificial social setting accentuates the futility and absurdity of the characters' predatory activities. The greedy predators seek that



which a lifeless and empty society possesses. What they seek, in greed, is nothing. "The root of all evil is greed," but their evil profits them not.

The *nouveau riche* Veneerings and their celebrated dinner parties illustrate the lifelessness and artificiality which characterized the society as a whole. The Veneerings are "bran new"(6) societal beings; and, as their name indicates, they are all surface and varnish. Beneath their surface is nothing. When Veneering, as a parliamentary candidate, is asked to express his views, he has none. He is vacuous. It is appropriate that the crest of the Veneering family is a camel, and that their banquet table is bedecked with all the elements bearing this ensignia. For the banquet table is an arid desert that offers no nourishment or life to the wealth-seeking guests.

The image of the social scavengers grouped about a banquet table is, further, an example of Dickens' tendency to show greedy people in terms of food and eating. The funeral feast of the Marmeladov family in *Crime and Punishment* is a similar grotesque rendering of the *motif* of greed. Given money by Raskolnikov, Katerina Marmeladov organizes a rather ostentatious funeral banquet to satisfy her pride and to keep up appearances. The banquet is attended by a score of scavengers who cared nothing for her late husband. And, when the banquet is over, the guests disappear, never to reciprocate any gesture of charity even though, shortly, Katerina, in a demented and consumptive state, goes out in to the street with tambourines and singing children, as a mendicant, to dance her way to death.<sup>15</sup>



That social values are based upon material possessions and wealth is amply evident to both Dickens and Dostoevsky. They present certain characters who desire and have only an economic definition. The characters *are* what they *have*. The more money, shares, and possessions the members have, the more substantial they feel. Chief among the advocates of this gospel is Podsnap. Along with his wealth, Podsnap augments his "reality" by having all the furnishings in his home as heavy as possible, because the possessions are an extension of himself. Their "hideous solidity"(131) reinforces his own considerable corporeality, and sense of self-importance.

Mr. Podsnap's understanding of his own daughter attests to a view of life as egotistic, brutal, and essentially inhuman as that of the equally self-centered Bounderby in *Hard Times*. The following description gives the monstrous debilitation of a mind that is unable to differentiate possession from person:

As Mr. Podsnap stood with his back to the drawing-room fire, pulling up his shirt-collar, like a veritable cock of the walk literally pluming himself in the midst of his possessions, nothing could have astonished him more than an intimation that Miss Podsnap, or any other young person properly born and bred, could not be exactly put away like the plate, brought out like the plate, polished like the plate, counted, weighed, and valued like the plate. That such a young person could possibly have a morbid vacancy in the heart for anything younger than the plate, or less monotonous than the plate; or that such a young person's thoughts could try to scale the region bounded on the north, south, east, and west, by the plate; was a monstrous imagination which he would on the spot have flourished into space.(142-3)

Reality, for Podsnap, is only within his own environment or within the circumference of his own daily routine.

The essence of the Gospel according to Podsnappery and its gross moral inadequacy is that "Mr. Podsnap settled that whatever



he put behind him he put out of existence."(128) By a wave of his arm, its reality, for him, disappears. He is particularly adept at evading anything disagreeable. When a guest at one of Podsnap's parties mentions that deaths by starvation had recently occurred in the streets of London, Podsnap absolutely denies its possibility and puts it out of mind. To allow and to consider such knowledge would be to confer guilt upon himself and upon English society. It would be a smirch upon the fictitious goodness of a middle-class philistinism, complacent and respectable through its insularity.

Dostoevsky presents a similar representative of the complacent, self-made man. He describes his bourgeois egoist thus:

His confidence was greatly strengthened by vanity and that degree of self-reliance which might best be called self-infatuation. Peter Petrovich, who had struggled up from nothing, was full of almost morbid admiration for himself, set a high value on his own brain and capabilities and sometimes, when he was alone, even admired his own face in the mirror. But more than anything in the world he loved and prized his money, got together laboriously and by every means in his power; it raised him to the level of everything that had been superior to him.(294)

Peter Petrovich Luzhin's desire for Dunya, Raskolnikov's sister, is akin to his desire for material possessions and advancements, and is similar to Podsnap's consideration of his family as basically undifferentiated from material acquisitions. However, Luzhin's definition of possession is more comprehensive and diabolical than Podsnap's; he wants to purchase Dunya body and soul, and he wants to be worshipped by her. Of Luzhin's dream of absolute control, Dostoevsky writes:

He dwelt with rapture on the idea of a virtuous maiden, poor (she must be poor), . . . one who had known a great many misfortunes, and was completely humble before him, one who all her life would think of him as her savior, reverence him, obey him, admire him and him alone . . . and reverently humble herself before him, while he exercised absolute and unlimited dominion over her!(295)



Luzhin wants to extend the boundries of self not only by economic means, but by totally subjugating and dominating another human being.

The important similarities between Luzhin and Podsnap are, first, that they demonstrate the pre-eminence of the money ethic in the bourgeois scale of success. Secondly, they have established a definition of themselves that is insular, or that, in effect, denies to the rest of the world any reality or importance apart from themselves. Furthermore, they can establish their own selves, justify their own methods, and sustain their own self-importance only by adhering to moral attitudes that are totally inadequate. According to Podsnap's system of ethics, an immoral activity is anything which brings a "blush into the cheek of the young person." (129) "There appeared to be no line of demarcation between the young person's excessive innocence, and another person's guiltiest knowledge." (129) Podsnap is incapable of differentiating between prudery and honest moral attitudes. In fact, Podsnap is more concerned with how to celebrate his daughter Georgiana's birthday without allusion to its biological origin (a grave indelicacy) than with the plight of the starving in London. Dickens differentiates between mere respectability and actual moral consciousness. Luzhin's total concern has been with economic advancement. Accordingly, he interprets all relationships in the world in terms of economic theory. He presents what are bowdlerized versions of English utilitarian and positivist theories. And he advocates especially a popular Russian interpretation of the nature of political economy as the operation of "enlightened egotism," and makes it the basis of his own self-justification.<sup>16</sup> Economic theories, especially those founded upon self-interest are, according



to Dostoevsky, an inadequate basis of self-definition and a poor model for individual moral responsibility. However, Luzhin uses these theories to vindicate his activities and to appear virtuous in a manner similar to Pecksniff's in Dickens' *Martin Chuzzlewit*. When Luzhin's plans are thwarted, he becomes a remorseless creature of vengeance. His attempt to stain the honor of Sonya is a case in point. He accuses Sonya of stealing money which he had planted upon her person. He is forced to acknowledge his guilt, and, hence, his self-definition fails. What is apparent in this probe of the money-possession ethic is that both Dickens and Dostoevsky find these bourgeois ideals and practices contemptible. Lacking true moral consciousness, they are, indeed, "dead in life." Podsnap's "they do-- I am sorry to be obliged to say it--as they do"(133) is, for Dickens, an expression of inexcusable bias and moral blindness. The "dead-weight of Podsnappery"(129) was a tremendous deterrent to England's future amelioration.

Unlike Podsnap and Luzhin who seem to lack consciousness in Dostoevsky's sense of the word, most of the characters in both novels are, in some ways, aware of the deficiencies of their existences. In some manner they acknowledge the "deadness"(OMF, 383) which surrounds them or characterizes their existences or way of life. In a bizarre rendering of this motif, the penny balladeer, Silas Wegg, goes to Mr. Venus, the articulator of bones, in quest of his old leg. And as Dorothy van Ghent explains it, "he bargains for his leg in a grotesque parody of the Resurrection of the Body . . . he is death-in-life."<sup>17</sup> If he cannot have his old leg or a substitute, he at least wants monetary compensation for its loss. Wegg wants to restore the missing



part of his being in economic terms. Even the avaricious Wegg, who subsequently spends his days haunting the Harmon dust mounds for fortune--another version of the scavenger--attempts to relieve the monotony of an arid existence by inventing an interminable fantasy about a relationship between himself and the people in the mansion on the corner. Having no significant life, he fabricates one for himself.

Jenny Wren, the dolls' dressmaker, also escapes from the misery of a life with a drunken father (whom she makes her child in a reversal of roles evidenced earlier by Amy Dorrit and William Dorrit in *Little Dorrit*) by the superimposing of her child's imagination upon the world of harsh realities. From the street, she watches an upper class lady, anatomizes her mentally, rushes home, and then metamorphizes the lady into a doll which she can manipulate and even injure. To compensate for her own impoverished state, and to retaliate against the lady's unfair advantages, Jenny Wren reverses the order of "the insulted and the injured" by her own acts of creation, by her dollmaking. From the rooftop garden of the Pubsey and Co. counting-house, Jenny Wren calls to the kindly Jew, Riah: "Come back and be dead, Come back and be dead!"(281) For her, life is suffering and hard work. Paradoxically, then, death, albeit only an assumed and temporary one, is an escape from an inadequate life to a better one. By escaping to the garden world of her imagination, to a state of mind in which she is "dead," she can transcend the deplorable conditions of her environment, her own shrewishness, and physical deformities. When young Fascination Fledgeby, the Machiavellian villain who masquerades behind the mask of Riah, asks Jenny "How do you feel



when you are dead?"(281) she replies:

Oh, so tranquil! . . . Oh, so peaceful and so thankful. And you hear the people who are alive, crying, and working, and calling to one another down in the close dark streets, and you seem to pity them so . . . !(218)

In Jenny it can be observed that Dickens never totally abandoned his belief in the efficacy of the child's imagination and the realm of the fairy tale as a means of coming to terms with the all too serious, yet absurd, work-a-day world. "Come back and be dead" has, of course, an element of more than childishness and play in it. As with Amy Dorrit, the innocence of Jenny is not ignorance.

Like Jenny Wren, John Harmon, heir to the Harmon dust heap fortune, can transcend the tyranny of a life that has been completely ordered for him, and he can observe the sincerity of the people grouped about his inheritance by assumed death. In a letter written to Forster in 1861, Dickens explains the role of Harmon in the novel. He is "a man, young and perhaps eccentric, feigning to be dead, and *being* dead to all intents and purposes to himself. . . ."<sup>18</sup>

Although his assumed existence becomes rather grotesque as when he views handbills announcing his own death and is accused of his own murder, John, by feigning death and assuming another identity, manages to order life on his own terms and is, hence, free and truly alive.

However, the most absorbing and problematic characters in *Our Mutual Friend* and *Crime and Punishment* do not have this facility to play dead. Yet, they, too, want to transcend the restrictions of their lives which are "living deaths." They want to be free from a certain tyranny; it may be from the apparent total repression of themselves within their social contexts, or the tyranny of their own



immanence from which they wish to be liberated. Or, it may be the freedom from moral categories which they desire. Dickens and Dostoevsky both held the conviction that without freedom there is no significant life, and life is, indeed, meaningless. True freedom resides in selflessness and altruism. For Dostoevsky, freedom is ultimately in Christ.

In essence, the problem that both Eugene Wrayburn and Raskolnikov attempt to resolve is how to be themselves rather than total abstractions. Eugene, a gentleman idler, follows a pattern of existence that has been completely pre-arranged for him by his respected father, M. R. F. Of his father's manipulation of him, which has allowed him no recourse to self-individualization, Eugene writes:

M. R. F. having always in the clearest manner provided (as he calls it) for his children by pre-arranging from the hour of birth of each, and sometimes from an earlier period, what the devoted little victim's calling and course in life should be, M. R. F. pre-arranged for myself that I was to be the barrister I am (with the slight addition of an enormous practice, which has not accrued), and also the married man I am not. (146)

Besides an awareness of the deterministic nature of his birthright, Eugene is also conscious of the absurdities of the social rituals of his polite society which are concerned solely with the officious perpetuation of wealth and station. And finally, Eugene has also attempted to discover his own meaning. Of this he says:

You know how dreadfully susceptible I am to boredom. You know that when I become enough of a man to find myself an embodied conundrum, I bored myself to the last degree by trying to find out what I meant. You know that at length I gave it up, and declined to guess any more. (286)

Finding himself totally circumscribed by birth, finding the social world boring and insignificant, and unable to solve the riddle of



himself ("I am a ridiculous fellow. Everything is ridiculous."

[166]) Eugene detaches himself from the world by a kind of willessness and abnegation. He becomes lethargic and bored, and "his weariness was chronic." (88) Only his cynicism and carelessness of manner sustain him. In his enervation and hopelessness which become metaphysical--a kind of *ennui*--Eugene is very Russian in spirit and brings to mind that Russian Eugene of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* (1831).<sup>19</sup> Akin to Eugene Onegin in his boredom, Eugene Wrayburn, through tedium, languidly allows himself to drift into a pursuit of Lizzie Hexam without particular pleasure or any defined aim.

Raskolnikov feels dead in the anthill of human society. In the *Notes* to the novel, Dostoevsky writes this: "The chief question which he finally formulates to himself clearly and puts positively: Why did my life come to an end?"<sup>20</sup> Raskolnikov makes numerous references to his overwhelming impulse to truly live. "Only to live, to live! No matter how--only to live;" (152) or again, "Life is! Was I not living just now?" (182) attest to his desire to feel significantly alive.

Whereas Eugene can see total enervation and willessness as the only way to tolerate life and to continue living, Raskolnikov, on the contrary, chooses the way of the will. Unlike Eugene who submits to the strictures and tyrannies of his class and his father, Raskolnikov considers it his right to exercise his will, to act according to what he desires, and not to submit to a society that is totally repressive. Raskolnikov wishes to prove that he is neither bound to moral laws nor to the laws and structures of society. For him, to exist is to break out from the social structures and to



transgress these laws. It may be observed that Dickens' Eugene Wrayburn and Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov, although contrasting in the ways in which they come to terms with their predicaments, are, however, analogous characters in the following respects: first, they both recognize the totally inhibiting forces of their respective societies, and they resent these restraints; and, secondly, they are both thorough-going nihilists. For them, human existence has no intrinsic value.

What Raskolnikov and Eugene so painfully discover, is that when translated into activity, their self-definitions fail and their philosophies are inadequate. As long as Wrayburn remains inert, passive, and languid, he is unculpable, but by becoming part of the Lizzie-Headstone-Wrayburn triangle, he becomes a victimizer, both in his quite possibly dishonorable intentions concerning Lizzie, and by his sadistic tormenting of Bradley Headstone. To act, and Wrayburn does move from total passivity to an enervated activity, is to incur guilt. So questionable are his actions that his friend Mortimer Lightwood, who idolizes him, is compelled to question Eugene about his motives and activities. Prior to Eugene's involvement with Headstone, Lightwood has the sensation of absorbing guilt osmotically, like a kind of moral infection or plague. When, for example, Wrayburn and Lightwood discover the drowned Gaffer Hexam, they feel somehow implicated in the murder, or "death-by-water." Wrayburn says this:

Invisible insects of diabolical activity swarm in this place. I am tickled and twitched all over. Mentally, I have now committed a burglary under the meanest circumstances and the myrmidons of justice are at my heels."(165)



He feels that the moral infection is external to him; it may be contagious, but it is not self-propagated. However, in his amorous pursuit of Lizzie, and in the chase between himself and Headstone which he encourages and which is a primary source of sadistic pleasure to him, there is discovered within himself the sources of evil.

Consider the following passage which clearly indicates that although Headstone has murderous instincts concerning Eugene, that Eugene is also the victimizer, and the schoolmaster the victim. Of his peculiar activity with Headstone, Eugene relates the following:

Then soberly and plainly, Mortimer, I goad the schoolmaster to madness. I make the schoolmaster so ridiculous, and so aware of being made ridiculous, that I see him chafe and fret at every pore when we cross one another. The amiable occupation has been the solace of my life, since I was baulked in the manner unnecessary to recall. I have derived inexpressible comfort from it . . . I walk at a great pace down a short street, rapidly turn the corner, and, getting out of his view, as rapidly turn back. I catch him coming on post, again pass him as unaware of his existence, and again he undergoes grinding torments.(542-3)

What makes this nocturnal chase so perversely satisfying to Eugene is largely threefold: first, the sensation and passion which he cannot summon within himself are experienced vicariously through Headstone. Secondly, he makes Headstone feel as though he were not alive, an intolerable discovery to Headstone, resembling his own consciousness of being "baulked in the manner unnecessary to recall." He, therefore, through Headstone, objectifies his own experience. And, thirdly, the nightly ritual of the chase is, in itself, an absurd, ridiculous activity in accordance with Eugene's view of human life; but it is, in this case, an absurdity which he can manipulate. In sum, Headstone functions as a kind of satisfying double to Eugene.



If Eugene finds this nightly sport his greatest pleasure, Headstone himself receives a kind of sado-masochistic enjoyment at being the victim of this chase. Of Headstone, Dickens writes:

The state of the man was murderous, and he knew it. More, he irritated it, with a kind of perverse pleasure akin to that which a sick man sometimes has in irritating a wound upon his body. Tied up all day with his disciplined show upon him, subdued to the performance of his routine of educational tricks, encircled by a gabbling crowd, he broke loose at night like an ill-tamed wild animal. Under his daily restraint, it was his compensation, not his trouble, to give a glance towards his state at night, and to the freedom of its being indulged . . . All his pains were taken, to the end that he might incense himself with the sight of the detested figure in her company and favour, in her place of concealment . . . He knew equally well that he fed his wrath and hatred, and that he accumulated provocation and self-justification, by being the nightly sport of the reckless and insolent Eugene. (546)

By nurturing his passion for Lizzie Hexam and his murderous hatred of Eugene Wrayburn, Headstone moves past that part of his mind which "had been a place of mechanical stowage" (217) to the unconscious. To allow his irrational impulses to rule, to cultivate the pain of hatred and unrequited passion, and to suffer the torments of a victim are his sole, albeit unconscious means of achieving a kind of "negative transcendence." Although the world outside refuses to acknowledge him, his existence is affirmed temporarily through a form of self-inflicted or self-interested suffering. As Nicholas Berdyaev wrote,

. . . the deeps of human nature are sounded not in sanity but in insanity, not in law-abidingness but in criminality, in obscure unconscious tendencies and not in daily life and in the parts of the <sup>21</sup>soul that have been enlightened by the daylight of consciousness.

In accordance with Berdyaev's observation, Headstone speaks of his passion to Lizzie in a graveyard. He says:

"No man knows till the time comes what depths are within him. To some men it never comes; let them rest and be thankful! To me, you brought it; on me, you forced it; and the bottom of



this raging sea," striking himself upon the breast, "has been heaved up ever since." (396)

As the above quotations indicate, the question of human suffering is an important one in both novels. Headstone's sado-masochistic actions are, as has been indicated, a proof of self, a testing of one's own immanence by the pain of suffering. Suffering becomes, in terms of Headstone's latent criminality, a kind of perverted ethics whereby he justifies his aggressive tendencies by becoming a suffering victim. Headstone is further a good example of Freud's contention that civilization is based upon the repression of the individual's instincts. In Headstone, his decency and respectability as a schoolmaster repress him, and when his erotic impulses become stronger than the inhibiting codes of his society, he breaks out like an unleashed beast to prey upon an unsuspecting Wrayburn. Similarly, for Dostoevsky, as the Man from Underground asserts, "suffering is the sole origin of consciousness."<sup>22</sup> Suffering in Raskolnikov's case, becomes a pre-requisite for his future salvation. He cannot save himself by reason. Like Dickens, Dostoevsky places the heart above reason. And suffering, for Dostoevsky, takes on a religious significance. Suffering, as a consequence of a great sin, as in Raskolnikov, is often a prelude to a future virtue, even sainthood, as in the figure of Father Zossima in *The Brothers Karamazov*. Suffering, for Dostoevsky's characters, is also inevitable. Contrarily, Dickens' heroes can go through devastating experiences--as, for example, young Oliver does in Fagin's den--and remain morally and emotionally untouched. But as the Russian critic Katarsky points out, the suffering child in Dostoevsky's novels always bears a psychological scar.<sup>23</sup>



Headstone's crime is clearly a crime of passion. In *Our Mutual Friend*, Dickens, for the first time, allowed latent sexuality as a motive for murder. In *Oliver Twist*, the murder involves lovers, but Bill Sykes kills his mistress, Nancy, not through frustrated eroticism, but because Nancy, by her sympathetic aiding of the orphaned Oliver, has violated their "gang" solidarity.<sup>24</sup> By his adoption of two roles, the schoolmaster and "the passion-wasted night-bird with respectable feathers, the worst night-bird of all," (555), as well as in his overwhelming passion for Lizzie Hexam, Bradley Headstone rather foreshadows the schizophrenic John Jasper, the respectable cathedral organist and frequenter of opium dens in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, who, because of his love for Rosa Bud, if we solve the mystery correctly, murders his beloved nephew, Edwin Drood. Of course, the crime in *Edwin Drood* appears more horrific, because sensuality and death appear together in an alien setting of cathedrals, crypts, and opium dens, thus evoking a "metaphysical shudder" reminiscent of the effects in John Donne's erotic poetry. The atmosphere of *Edwin Drood* accords more directly with the nightmares of Svidrigaylov in *Crime and Punishment*, who dreams of a sensuous young corpse and a child prostitute.

Once the decent Headstone becomes conscious of his desire for Lizzie, she becomes the one fixed idea in his existence. Whereas Headstone previously totally suppressed and restrained himself, making himself into a kind of mechanical man, (217) now, through unfulfilled eroticism, he becomes increasingly under the rule of primal instincts and desires. Because the object of his desire is Lizzie, but the obstruction to the attainment of his object is



Eugene Wrayburn, his mind shifts from Lizzie to Eugene. It moves from the fulfillment of love to the contemplation of murder. Because he feels that Eugene has won the affection which he desires, his passion for her is augmented by his hatred of Eugene, and he determines to seek revenge by thwarting their romance. He avows, "then I hope that I may never kill him!"(398) Eugene now becomes his fixed idea. Speaking to Lizzie of his love for her, he also reveals the unrelieved presence of Eugene upon his mind. Bradley says:

I knew all this about Mr. Eugene Wrayburn, all the while you were drawing me to you. I strove against the knowledge, but quite in vain. It made no difference in me. With Mr. Eugene Wrayburn in my mind, I went on. With Mr. Eugene Wrayburn in my mind, I spoke to you just now. With Mr. Eugene Wrayburn in my mind, I have been set aside and I have been cast out.(399)

The thought of Eugene becomes a compulsion with Headstone, a compulsion which he means to satisfy through murder. Furthermore, Eugene himself incenses Headstone so greatly that what commences, to use Freud's terms, as a movement from the *ego* to the *id*, from the rule of the conscious and rational self to the absolute dominance of the irrational and subconscious, ends in veritable madness and in actual physical disturbances. Headstone has fits, he perspires, he has nose-bleeds, and when he is spurned by Lizzie in the scene in the graveyard, he beats upon the coping of the cemetery with his fist until it bleeds.

How does Eugene intensify Headstone's desire to murder him? He provides three auxiliary motives for the "passion-wasted night-bird."(555) Eugene constantly makes a mockery of him as a school teacher, insolently addressing him as "Schoolmaster"(292) instead of using his proper name. The teaching profession, while a respectable



occupation, had an undetermined or unestablished status upon the Victorian social scale and, hence, Eugene uses Headstone's inferior social status, as contrasted with his own gentleman's rank, as a ploy against him.<sup>25</sup> This difference of social status reduces his pride, destroys his self-respect which he had so carefully nurtured, and humbles him. Secondly, as previously mentioned, Eugene also pretends during their nocturnal games, that Headstone does not exist. Bradley's crime becomes, then, on a subconscious level, an act of self-assertion; he affirms his own existence by attempting to murder the one who denies it, and prevents its complete fulfillment through Lizzie. After Headstone has unsuccessfully attempted to explain himself to Eugene, the insolent Eugene remarks: "A curious monomaniac . . . The man seems to believe that everybody was acquainted with his mother." (294) But this is exactly what Eugene does to Headstone; he attempts to pretend that Headstone had never been born. Thirdly, Eugene provokes him further by adopting a manner which is the diametric opposite of Headstone's own irrational state. Whereas Eugene is indolent, composed, disdainfully polite, articulate, and apparently totally rational, Headstone is the inverse. He is wild, passionate, inarticulate almost to the point of incoherence, and totally under the rule of irrational impulses. Of this, Headstone confesses,

Oh, what a misfortune is mine . . . that I cannot so control myself as to appear a stronger creature than this, when a man who has not felt in all his life what I have felt in a day can so command himself! (292)

Whereas, in review, the crime of Headstone has an irrational and unsought origin, the basis of Raskolnikov's crime is rational. Raskolnikov's murder, at its conception, is intended as an assertion



of the conscious mind. It is conceived as an act of the will. Raskolnikov intends to assert his will against the larger societal will. He is what Freud called a "discontent," determined to break out from a confining civilization which, for its own preservation, represses him and prevents him from realizing his desires. However, once the idea of murder moves from conception to reality, in the very carrying out of the crime and in its aftermath, it is evidenced that the unconscious dominates no matter how hard Raskolnikov's reasoning mind tries to rule. Consider the motives Raskolnikov presents for his crime, motives which all have a rational ground. Raskolnikov wants to rise above the social "anthill" where he is bound to carry out social duties at the expense of individual freedom and desires; in brief, society's laws and mores tyrannize him. They condemn him to a life of obscurity and poverty. What can be more important than his own self-realization? Thus, Raskolnikov rejects society's codes for his own in quest of individual essence and worth. Under "The Idea of the Novel" in *The Notebooks to Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevsky has the following entry which explains Raskolnikov's intentions:

In *his* image in the novel is expressed the idea of extraordinary pride, arrogance, and contempt for all society. His idea is to take that society into his power. Despotism is a trait of his. It goes to meet him . . . He wants to rule--and does not know the means. Take power as quickly as possible and get rich. And the idea of murder came into his head.<sup>26</sup>

In the novel, Raskolnikov expresses the same view. He cries: "Freedom and power, but above all, power! Power over all trembling creatures, over the whole ant-heap!"(317) To escape from the authority and tyranny of society and to be totally free, he will assume absolute authority and power himself. He will realize the power of his will.



"Libido dominandi"--the will to power--is his feeble watchword. He will murder, or as Steven Marcus defines murder, he will commit "the most desperate act of self-assertion known to civilized society."<sup>27</sup> Not only does Raskolnikov choose "the most extreme act of self-will" as the means of achieving "unconditional selfhood and power,"<sup>28</sup> his apparent motive, but he also wants to sanction his action. He feels he must have a defence of his "principle."

The intellectual argument for his crime is given in an article, "Concerning Crime," which he composed. It should, in passing, be observed that his interest in crime is a natural one, for at the university he was a student of law. In this article, Raskolnikov proposes that there are two classes of people, the ordinary and the extraordinary. By the laws of nature, the ordinary class of people are compelled to submit to laws and have no right to transgress them. On the other hand, extraordinary men, such as Napoleon and Mohamet, by virtue of offering something new, did and were, licensed, to transgress the law with impunity, and even to shed blood.<sup>29</sup> They had what the astute detective, Porfiry, disapprovingly refers to as the "moral permission,"(253) in effect, to do so. And furthermore, "these benefactors and law-givers of humanity,"(249) to establish a new law, had to break an old one. Therefore, they were all transgressors. Diabolically, bloodshed becomes "a matter of conscience." (253)

Applying these principles to his own situation, Raskolnikov must defend his crime by maintaining the following: the "rightness" of his principles, the infallibility of his reason by a consciousness that he is truly one of the "extraordinary" people, and by believing



that his crime has some kind of humanitarian basis. Above all, Raskolnikov must be unimpeachable according to the "law" which he has established for himself. He must murder with impunity. He must act according to the law, his own. The validity of the essence he believes he has created for himself, through the act of murder, depends, therefore, upon sustaining a belief in the justice and rightness of his own act. He must continue to justify his action in order to preserve the illusion that he is right and society is wrong. So, although in his quest for individual essence, he has "stepped over the barriers"(316) and does trespass upon the unallowable, and although he is forensically guilty by the laws of society and universal laws, he is justified as long as he does not transgress his own law.

After admitting his murder to Sonya, he is compelled, by inner necessity, to review all his possible motives.<sup>30</sup> He claims, first, that he murdered simply to rob the pawnbroker, but Sonya herself is able to invalidate this theory by stating: ". . . how could you give away your last penny, and yet commit murder for gain?"(395) Secondly, Raskolnikov tries to provide a humanitarian basis for his criminal activity. He wished to help his destitute mother and sister Dunya, and to become a benefactor to mankind, but this, too, he denounces as "rubbish."(401) Thirdly, he affirms that his motive was to determine whether he was a Napoleon or not. Was he "ordinary" or "extraordinary"? He had to determine his own category. He had to prove whether he could, like Napoleon, become a law-giver rather than merely abiding by laws which served him not at all. He had to dare to transgress against universal moral



sanctions in the exercise of his own law, and to discover whether he had the courage to assume authority. "I only wanted to dare, Sonya, that was the only reason." (401) Ultimately, then, he kills to test his theory and to determine whether he could live according to his own law. Murder was, as he said, to test himself. At the conclusion of this criminal's search for his own motive, which is a search for his own essence, he affirms that "I killed myself, not that old creature! There and then I murdered myself at one blow, for ever!" (402) His experiment has failed, or so he believes for the moment, for Raskolnikov vacillates constantly between self-affirmation and egoism and self-effacement and denunciation.

By Raskolnikov's referring to killing himself, we see that Dostoevsky developed the whole movement of the novel in terms of the idea of killing, and all the paradoxes which develop in its meanings. Quintessentially, Raskolnikov must keep his ideas from annihilation, and the only way he can see to accomplish this is by murder, an assertion of will and strength. To kill, then, is his principle; it is his one "fixed" idea. Further he tries to kill the principles of an acquisitive, oppressive, and imprisoning society symbolized in the person of the pawnbroker. Moreover, to kill is a chief crime in that society. And finally, by executing his principle, he, in the aftermath of the murder, realizes that his principle has failed. That is, he "kills" his idea, and as he affirmed above, he symbolically "kills" himself, or at least the definition of himself which he had established by the act of murder. Annihilation of "other" effects annihilation of the self, the antithesis of Raskolnikov's intention.



The failure of his crime--a failure in a bid for significant life--is attested to in the following analysis of Raskolnikov:

I wanted to overstep all restrictions as quickly as possible . . . I killed not a human being but a principle! Yes, I killed a principle, but as for surmounting the barriers, I did not do that; I remained on this side . . . The only thing I knew how to do was kill! And I could not do that properly either, it seems . . . No, I have only one life given to me, and it will never come again; I do not want to wait for the "common weal." I want to have my own life, or else it is better not to live at all.(264)

Wherein does his crime fail in terms of his own principle?

He permits himself the right to murder. That is his "principle."

But in the execution of his principle, he sets qualifications. He does not murder at random and with indifference, but he must victimize the most hateful and loathesome person he knows. The greed, acquisitiveness, and moral corruption of the vile money-lender will exceed his own "immorality." But this is exactly where he goes wrong. He cannot establish categories of degrees of moral rightness or wrongness. By doing so, he acts against his own principle, for his theory includes the condition that he must have no consciousness of rightness or wrongness. He must merely act, and his acts will be justifiable. He tries to place himself beyond moral categories, and yet he will, on occasion, feel and act morally. He feels compassion for the seduced girl who is chased by an ancient rake and instructs a policeman to aid the girl. He is sympathetic towards Marmeladov, and upon the drunkard's death, supplies money to the Marmeladov family.

A second premise that he makes is that he is an "extraordinary" person. By the exercise of the will, by daring, by taking authority into his own hands, he can, he believes, prove himself to be a superior being, a Napoleon in the great Romantic tradition of



Stendhal's Julien Sorel. But this definition of himself also fails. How does a man who almost hides under the bed of the old pawnbroker-- a denigrating image of himself which Raskolnikov uses(263)--and who cowardly hits her on the head from behind with an ax, compare his actions with the heroic stance of a Napoleon?

Furthermore, he tries to live according to an abstract code, following the rules of logic, but he is forced to see himself as a creature of continuous self-questionings, vacillations, and self-contradictions. By attempting to live solely according to the dictates of his intellect, he completely denies to himself an inner life. But he discovers, just prior to the murder, and in all the events following it, that it is this inner life which is the real pulse of his existence. He has a sense of being drawn against his will to the execution of his crime. Raskolnikov, through this crime, intends to assert his freedom and his will, a rational process. But before he commits the crime, he thinks there is "something fateful and fore-ordained about it." (63) He wants to be totally and consciously free, and yet he has a sense of compulsion in the actual carrying out of the crime, and it is performed in an almost somnambulistic state. Furthermore, it is enacted with the greatest degree of stupidity and lack of foresight. The crime is successful sheerly by chance, for he forgets even the most obvious of details. He, for example, neglects to close the door behind himself on the scene of the crime. The ordinary Raskolnikov dominates the Napoleonic creature of his imagination.

Like Raskolnikov, Headstone also has this sense of being drawn toward this crime. Of this phenomenon Dickens writes:



If great criminals told the truth--which, being great criminals, they do not--they would very rarely tell of their struggles against the crime. Their struggles are toward it. They buffet with the opposing waves to gain the bloody shore, not to recede from it.(546)

Headstone is drawn by "inner necessity." Dickens and Dostoevsky thus demonstrate the pre-eminence of the subconscious in the fulfillment of criminal impulses. Both Headstone and Raskolnikov, after committing their respective crimes, are aware of the deficiencies of their offences, and they react in analogous ways. What is Headstone's state of mind after attempting to murder Eugene? Dickens describes the criminal's mind in the following way:

Now, too, was he cursed with a state of mind more wearing and more wearisome than remorse. He had no remorse; but the evil-doer who can hold that avenger at bay, cannot escape the slower torture of incessantly doing the evil deed again and doing it more efficiently. In the defensive declarations and pretended confessions of murderers, the pursuing shadow of this torture may be traced through every lie they tell . . . The state of that wretch who continually finds the weak spots in his own crime, and strives to strengthen them when it is unchangeable, is a state that aggravates the offence by doing the deed a thousand times instead of once; but it is a state, too, that tauntingly visits the offence upon a sullen unrepentant nature with its heaviest punishment every time.(708-9)

Headstone is tormented because his crime fails, and Eugene not only lives, but the attempted murder is the actual means by which Eugene and Lizzie are united. Although Raskolnikov succeeds in murdering Elena Ivanovna, his crime is a failure because it does not bring about the kind of selfhood Raskolnikov anticipated. He, too, feels no remorse. Dostoevsky's depiction of the absence of remorse in the young murderer is remarkably like Dicken's portrayal of Headstone's remorselessness. Of Raskolnikov he writes,

If only fate had granted him remorse, scalding remorse as tortured men into dreaming of the rope or deep still water!



Oh, he would have welcomed it gladly! Tears and suffering--they, after all, are also life. But he did not feel remorse for his crime.(520)

In the incessant recollection of details of the crime, in the constant fear of detection and apprehension, in the cowardice of its actual execution (Raskolnikov uses an ax and hits the pawnbroker from behind; similarly, Headstone clubs Eugene from behind), in their remorselessness, in the implications that they are potential criminals from birth and not criminals because of poor environment, in the fact that both crimes are pre-meditated and yet somehow involuntary crimes, Dickens and Dostoevsky have portrayed the process of the criminal mentality in relation to their respective crimes in quite analogous ways. Another important similarity in the delineation of the two criminals is in the pathological manifestations of their criminal activities. While pre-meditating and contemplating the murder, and in its aftermath, Headstone exhibits that he is physically disturbed as well as mentally deranged. When Raskolnikov, in his article on crime, describes the state of mind of a criminal, he affirms that illness and physical disturbances would accompany the criminal. His own condition after murdering the old woman attests to the validity of what was previously merely his theory.

One of the most revelatory passages in Dostoevsky's exegesis of crime is the correlation of crime with isolation and alienation. In Raskolnikov's act of self-assertion, he must deny the humanity of the rest of the world. He fixes his mind upon the belief that he kills an abstraction, a principle, or something less than human. Thus, he describes Elena Ivanovna as a "principle"(264) or a "louse." (264) When he thinks about his crime, he can only recall the corrupt



money-lender. But, in truth, of course, Raskolnikov's murder is a multiple one. He also kills Lizaveta, the pawnbroker's sister, who, to further augment the horror of his crime, is pregnant. Lizaveta is a meek, trusting, well-meaning, simple creature. Although he does not intend to kill her, he is forced to, and in her murder, he can find no self-justification. Therefore, he must blot her from his mind as though he had not killed her. This is imperative in order to sustain his rightness. Only when he confesses his crime to Sonya, whom he, incidentally, actually compares with Lizaveta, does he speak about her murder. Further, Raskolnikov remains in his room, thus isolating himself from all of society, and even refuses at certain times to communicate with his mother and sister. In a draft of a letter written to his publisher, Katkov, Dostoevsky explains this.

There, too, the psychological process of the crime develops. Insoluble problems arise for the murderer; unsuspected and unexpected feelings torment his heart. The truth of God and the law of the earth take their toll, and he ends by being forced to denounce himself, forced, even if he should perish in jail, to rejoin people. The feeling of isolation and separation from mankind which he felt as soon as he committed the crime wore him down. The law of truth and human nature took its toll . . . the criminal himself decides to accept torments in order to redeem his act . . . Beside this, my story makes allusion to the idea that the punishment meted out by the law to the criminal deters the criminal far less than the lawgivers think, because he himself requires it morally.<sup>31</sup>

To deny to the world outside of oneself any authenticity as Raskolnikov does, is to find oneself surrounded by a void. Raskolnikov isolates himself from others, and, according to Dostoevsky, there can be no essential life when the ties with humanity have been severed. "Crossing the barriers"--the act of crime--puts the criminal on the alien side of humanity.



In the chapter of *Our Mutual Friend* entitled, "Better to be Abel than Cain" Dickens demonstrates a similar idea. Like Cain who is banished from Eden (from human society) and is forced to wander as an exile over the face of the earth, so Bradley Headstone, through his crime, is cut off from the rest of society. The object of Bradley Headstone's criminal assault is to affirm his existence by annihilating the one who denies it, and who prevents him from realizing fulfillment through Lizzie. However, the murder further alienates him from human relationships and from the life-transmitting energy supplied by another's love. When Charley Hexam, Lizzie's brother, denounces him, his last close link with human society, and Lizzie in particular, is severed. The horror of total isolation is insupportable to him, and he "shrank together on the floor, and grovelled there, with the palms of his hands tight-clasping his hot temples, in unutterable misery, and unrelieved by a single tear." (713) Finally, when Headstone slowly wipes his name off the blackboard after being accused by Rogue Riderhood in front of the schoolchildren, thus obliterating his identity, he is very near total annihilation. Shortly, he will go to the river and meet Riderhood and they will die together in a murderous embrace. Headstone moves only from being the mechanical, respectable schoolmaster, to the murderous animal, and then to total annihilation, the death of the self. Never is self-actualization effectively achieved.<sup>32</sup>

Why both Headstone and Raskolnikov, through their respective crimes, are isolated from humanity and yet remorseless, is, first, because in their own minds they have made themselves the victims and others the victimizers. Although Raskolnikov tries to prove that



the world outside of himself is unjust and overpowering and dehumanizing, paradoxically, he is compelled to turn back to that rejected world to find justification for his actions. As Wasiolek points out, Raskolnikov wants to be a victim of society. The assailant wishes to be a victim. The criminal wants to be pursued. By returning to the scene of the crime and asking where the pool of blood was, by almost confessing his act of murder to an acquaintance, and by being discernibly upset and yet relieved when the painter confesses to committing the crime for it is *his* own crime, Raskolnikov indicates that he wants to keep the case alive.<sup>33</sup> By desiring this pursuit, Raskolnikov hopes to rechannel the moral responsibility from himself to society. If he is hunted by the law-enforcers, then he can classify them, in his own mind, as culpable, for they are torturing and tormenting him. However, in the tracking down of the criminal, the detective, Porfiry, uses what Dostoevsky terms a modern psychological method. For some time Porfiry pretends not to consider Raskolnikov as a suspect in the crime. He waits until Raskolnikov appears mentally and morally ready to confess, and then he names him as the criminal. In his very comprehensive knowledge of Raskolnikov and of the working of the human mind, Porfiry recalls to mind the figure of Jaggers in *Great Expectations* who also, as an advocate of the law, seems to have an almost omniscient knowledge of the criminals and manipulates them in such discreet and yet determining ways.

A somewhat analogous situation occurs in *Our Mutual Friend*. Headstone wants to be victimized by Eugene for he then has some justification for his murderous impulses. He is being persecuted; therefore, he is justified in retaliating. After the attempted



murder, Eugene indicates that he knows who his assailant is but wishes that no mention be made of the murderer, and neither should any attempt be made to bring him to justice. Headstone has, therefore, no sustaining means of self-justification. Neither Eugene, as a lawyer or advocate of the law, nor the law itself is the ultimate victimizer or oppressor.

Why do both murderers remain unrepentant? Their unrelenting unrepentance and continuous self-justifications are their "saving lies." It is through their respective crimes that they attempt to define and assert their existence. To condemn their crimes by repentance or some act of contrition would be to invalidate and nullify the existences which they feel they have created for themselves. That is precisely why Raskolnikov protests to Dunya's use of the word "crime" when he informs her that he is going to confess. When Dunya says: "Surely, by advancing to meet your punishment, you are half atoning for your crime?"(498) Raskolnikov angrily retorts:

Crime? What crime? . . . Killing a foul, noxious louse, that old moneylender, no good to anybody, who sucked the life-blood of the poor, so vile that killing her ought to bring absolution for forty sins--was that a crime?(498)

Both criminals justify themselves against all evidence to the contrary.

Does this mean, therefore, that the two criminals actually experience no guilt? In both Headstone and Raskolnikov guilt is redirected so that it is not fully apprehended on a conscious level. When Headstone attempts to murder Eugene Wrayburn, he is disguised as Rogue Riderhood. Dickens' use of this disguise is ingenious. By assuming a disguise, Headstone is not only attempting to escape detection by placing the blame upon a commonly acknowledged criminal,



Riderhood, but he actually becomes the wharf character. He physically, morally, and even mentally changes identity. Of him, Dickens writes:

And whereas, in his own schoolmaster clothes, he usually looked as if they were the clothes of some other man, he now looked, in the clothes of some other man, or men, as if they were his own.  
(631)

Being a respectable schoolmaster is just a role which Headstone plays. His true nature is criminal. However, Headstone identifies himself only as a schoolmaster. Therefore, the crime is committed not by himself but by his double. The responsibility for the crime, therefore, lies not in himself, but in his double. After the attempted murder, he throws the clothes of the disguise into the river, thus severing the link between himself and his double, and, thereby, relieves himself of any feelings of guilt regarding the crime.

While Headstone transfers his crime to Riderhood, as previously mentioned, Raskolnikov adamantly denies its existence. On a subconscious level, however, Raskolnikov is compelled to acknowledge his crime and to experience guilt no matter how convincingly his reasoning mind can argue to the contrary. And as Rogue Riderhood functions as an "alter ego" to Bradley Headstone--manifesting his complicity and very real guilt--so Dostoevsky creates the amoralist Svidrigaylov as a dark image of Raskolnikov. Through this debauched scoundrel whom he detests, the young murderer is compelled to see the furthest extension of his own perverse principles. Of the peculiar relationship between Svidrigaylov and Raskolnikov, Dostoevsky writes: "Svidrigaylov especially worried him; it might almost be said that he could not get past Svidrigaylov." (420) And again, Svidrigaylov identifies himself closely with Raskolnikov when he says: "You shall



see that it is possible to live with me,"(419) and he speaks of himself and Raskolnikov as "kindred spirits."(278) Recognition of an affinity between himself and Svidrigaylov revulses Raskolnikov, and causes him to doubt his own principles. For although he gives himself what the examiner, Porfiry, terms the "*moral* permission to shed blood,"(253) he finds Svidrigaylov's complicity in the death of his servant, his wife, and a young girl totally reprehensible. His principle works only in a vacuum; it only applies to him. The *reductio ad absurdum* of his position is revealed to him through Svidrigaylov. Both a consistency of moral attitude and a universality of application are absent in Raskolnikov.

How does Svidrigaylov compare to Raskolnikov? Svidrigaylov places himself beyond moral categories. Thus, neither his debaucheries nor his charitable gifts of money to the Marmeladov family after Katerina's death (an action significantly repeating a similar one made by Raskolnikov) or the money given to Dunya have any ethical significance to him. His sensual pursuits, somewhat akin to Eugene's relationship to Lizzie Hexam are, initially, a response to tedium, for he is, as he explains it, "bored to death."(272) Secondly, he, like Eugene, is in search of his own nature. Because he is ultimately unsuccessful in these quests, he continues his debaucheries, not even to satisfy any base erotic cravings, for he no longer has any, but as a distraction to an overwhelming anguish, a metaphysical despair. The only fruition of his despair is the consciousness that he has nothing to live for, and so he makes his final stance--what he euphemistically refers to as his trip to America--and he commits suicide.



At the beginning of his Siberian imprisonment, Raskolnikov faces the dilemma of human existence in the same way that Svidrigaylov does, as a nihilist. Life, for him holds no intrinsic values.

Fortunately, Raskolnikov moves past this nihilism--a version of a "living death"--to "the herald of a coming crisis in his life, of his coming resurrection, of a future new outlook on life." (521) How does Dostoevsky present Raskolnikov as different from Svidrigaylov, as one who has not moved totally away from a consciousness of good and evil? It is through the use of dreams that this is effected. Raskolnikov often has "waking dreams," (64) the most frequently recurring one being a vision of drinking clear, cool water from a stream at a peaceful Egyptian oasis. But although Raskolnikov's semi-conscious dream is of water, which obviously symbolizes his quest for significant life, he has four other involuntary dreams which are not wish-fulfillments, but which express that which his conscious and reasoning self denies.<sup>34</sup> In these dreams, the murder which he perpetrated but acknowledged in his conscious thinking and defence only as an idea, a principle, a means to life, or at worst only the killing of something less than human, that is, a louse, and, hence, not reprehensible, is recognized for what it is. It is a crime against mankind punishable by law, a sin against God, and an act culpable even in his own subconscious mind. In his dreams he is compelled to call murder by its proper name. The latent content of all his dreams is a wish to kill, to effect death, or the dreams involve actual deaths. In all, Raskolnikov is struck with terror at the deaths. And he, in fact, acknowledges his guilt and responsibility in the fabric of his dreams.



In *Our Mutual Friend*, it is of some import to observe how Dickens puns the word "dead" in relation to Eugene. It becomes a kind of *leitmotif* in the novel, in a way resembling Dostoevsky's play upon the meaning of "kill" in relation to Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment* (which, incidentally, becomes synonymous with death and the effecting of death, both of subject and object). Consider the following passages describing or relating to Eugene Wrayburn which define him in terms of death. When describing Lizzie's disturbing emotional effect upon himself, Eugene, lamentingly, explains the following:

You don't know how you haunt me and bewilder me. You don't know how the cursed carelessness that is overofficious in helping me at every other turning of my life, WON'T help me here. You have struck it dead, I think, and I sometimes almost wish you had struck me dead along with it.(692)

In the same scene, Eugene bids Lizzie farewell by embracing her "almost as if she were sanctified to him by death, and kissed her once, almost as he might have kissed the dead."(695-6) Short minutes thereafter, an attempt upon his life is made by the murderously incensed Headstone, but Eugene is fortuitously saved from the deadly waters of the river by Lizzie. While attempting to rescue the mutilated body of Eugene which was "insensible, if not virtually dead,"(700) the anguished Lizzie pleads, "And grant, O Blessed Lord God, that through poor me he may be raised from death, and preserved to some one else to whom he may be dear one day, though never dearer than to me!"(701) Eugene's morbundity and inner nullity are attributable to the debilitating strictures of his vacuous privileged class. His vacuity is also existential, a spiritual emptiness.



If death characterizes the environment, actions, and immanence of these characters, how, then, may renewal be accomplished? The resurrection of Eugene Wrayburn and Raskolnikov from their death in society and their inner nullity is accomplished with the guidance of their mentors, Lizzie Hexam and Sonya Marmeladov, respectively. These women are the instruments or mediums of redemption and renewal. While the ultimate importance of the two women is to demonstrate "*das ewig Weibliche*," or the Goethean principle of "the eternally feminine which leads us upward," Dickens and Dostoevsky's innovative treatments of the roles of these women, provide a fascinating study and reveal some striking similarities in the authors' conceptions of them.

It is noteworthy, first, that although Sonya, as a prostitute, is associated with base passion and sexuality, and Lizzie evokes some vague desire in Eugene, yet they become the vehicles of a purely spiritual redemption. Lizzie is the desired object of Headstone's passion, and Wrayburn's pursuit of her, if it has a purpose at all, is that of sexual conquest. Sonya is a prostitute wearing the accoutrements of her trade and carrying the required yellow card. Yet both women are essentially pure and unsullied. As Raskolnikov observed of Sonya, "All her shame had obviously touched her only mechanically; no trace of real corruption had yet crept into her heart; he could see that. . . ." (310) Lizzie is the daughter of a wharf character. Her father's activities are questionable. Yet, she remains untainted by the "low life" of her environment. Her very speech testifies to the purity of her nature.<sup>35</sup> Both Dickens and Dostoevsky are aware of "the ambiguity of innocence." Sonya is forced into prostitution to help her destitute family. The moral



"doubleness" of Sonya's position--that she is reprehensible by society's mores and yet, in truth, uncorrupted and justified in her activities--accords with Raskolnikov's own view of himself. He is a criminal by society's laws, but innocent by his own law. Hence, he identifies with her as being one of his own kind.

Raskolnikov further identifies with Sonya in his recognition that she, too, is a kind of violator. He says to her, "You too have stepped over the barrier . . . you were able to do it. You laid hands on yourself, you destroyed a life . . . *your own* (that makes no difference!)." (316) In this, too, then, he feels a kinship with her. Eugene, in his association with Lizzie, is also aware of barriers. But in his case, the barriers are of class, money, and education. To cross these barriers would be a violation of a social order, and, of course, not a moral but a social crime. "Pursuing the inquiry into his own nature," (696) Eugene meditates thus:

Now, if I married her. If, outfacing the absurdity of the situation in correspondence with M. R. F., I astonished M. R. F. to the utmost extent of his respected powers, by informing him that I had married her, how would M. R. F. reason with the legal mind? "You wouldn't marry for some money and some station, because you were frightfully likely to become bored. Are you less frightfully likely to become bored, marrying for no money and no station? Are you sure of yourself?" (696-7)

To cross over the barriers between one class and another, to align with another lower class, would be a social outrage. This, of course, is the sentiment expressed by the disapproving Voices of Society at the conclusion of the novel. Eugene deliberates violating a social law as a kind of rebellion against his father and a society which place supreme values upon money and class. But because of his lethargy, he finds it difficult to exercise his will and to act against his



present situation until the crisis of his near-drowning arises. It should be noted that even in Raskolnikov's situation there is an awareness of social classifications. The *bourgeois* immoralist, Luzhin, attempts to uphold the bulwarks of middle-class self-righteousness against the social pariah, Sonya. He suggests to Raskolnikov that by compelling his mother and sister to associate with Sonya, he could be insulting them. If the women make Eugene and Raskolnikov aware of barriers between classes and people, they also help them to bridge these barriers. Thus, Sonya advocates that Raskolnikov go to the crossroads and prostrate himself upon the earth, an act of contrition and a symbolic ritual of a reunion of himself with the rest of society, a testament to a restored humanity. By their compassion, humility, and absence of contempt and devotion, Lizzie and Sonya are foils to the egotistic, scornful, and self-directed natures of Eugene and Raskolnikov.

Even after Eugene and Raskolnikov are drawn by the impelling vitality of love and devotion, however, their ultimate salvation is still only tentative or marginal. Eugene's world-weariness and lethargy are still with him even after Lizzie has saved him from drowning. So, although Eugene is literally restored to life, his true resurrection is not effected until he learns to practice the ideals of duty and self-renunciation so precious to the Victorian age. Sonya, in her love and utter dedication to Raskolnikov, follows him to Siberia, and thereby shares vicariously even in his punishment. Yet, Raskolnikov is often repulsed by her and resents her presence. Love, so manifest through Sonya, is not sufficient wholly to release Raskolnikov from his bondage to himself. For Dostoevsky sees



redemption as not realizable in solely human terms; it demands a miracle. Through sin, or in Raskolnikov's case, crime, suffering, and finally through a recognition of divine reality, Raskolnikov is resurrected to a new life. That Sonya, whose name means "cosmic love" or "Divine Wisdom," is an instrument or messenger of the Divine Principle, replacing his finite, limited principle, is now perceived by Raskolnikov. In the Easter season, in Siberia the words of the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead by Christ, which Sonya had previously read to him, now become his own message, and his own means of salvation.

'Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again.

'Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

'Jesus said unto her, *I am the resurrection and the life*; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:  
(313)

Salvation--the renewal of a dehumanized life--is an act of freedom exercised by the individual will. Both writers acknowledge that even with the women as spiritual mentors, Raskolnikov and Eugene have to work out their own salvation, a resurrection or renewal that is, at best, only conditional.



### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>*Our Mutual Friend* was translated and published in Russia the same year that it appeared in England.

<sup>2</sup>Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, p. 817. All subsequent quotations will be from the New Oxford Illustrated Dickens edition.

<sup>3</sup>The view expressed here is the one given in the novel. Actually, this is only a partial view of Dickens' attitude towards the Ragged schools, for Dickens praised as well as criticized them. The teachers' moral courage, coping with poor pay, unsatisfactory teaching conditions and unestablished social status, made them, in these respects, admirable.

<sup>4</sup>While writing *Crime and Punishment* Dostoevsky wrote "Melancholy, unsavory and stinking Petersburg in the summer corresponds to my mood. . . ." rpt. in the Norton Critical Edition of *Crime and Punishment*, p. 674. The "waste land" characteristics of *Our Mutual Friend* are well known.

<sup>5</sup>Some of the radicals were Chernyshevski and the even more radical Dobrolyubov, as well as Herzen, an expatriate who lived in London, and was there when Dostoevsky visited the city in June, 1862.

<sup>6</sup>Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 246. All subsequent quotations will be from the Norton edition.

<sup>7</sup>The social problem of prostitution is also an issue in *Crime and Punishment*, and Dostoevsky treats prostitution as a form of dehumanization.

<sup>8</sup>The "deadness" of the environment surrounding some of the moribund characters is striking in both novels. Mortimer Lightwood's law office is described as a "burial-ground." (20) Silas Wegg is "so wooden a man" (46) working in "the hardest little stall of all the sterile little stalls in London." (45) When Raskolnikov walks the streets of St. Petersburg after committing the murder, "everything was blank and dead, like the stones he trod on, dead for him, and for him alone. . . ." (168)

<sup>9</sup>This is discussed at the conclusion of the text of *Crime and Punishment*, p. 528.

<sup>10</sup>Donald Fanger, *Dostoevsky and Romantic Realism*, p. 208.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup>Edward Wasiolek, *Dostoevsky: The Major Fiction*, p. 61.

<sup>13</sup>This analogy was brought to my attention by Dr. R. D. McMaster.



<sup>14</sup>Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Pardoner's Prologue" of *The Canterbury Tales* from *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 2nd ed., ed. F. N. Robinson, p. 148.

<sup>15</sup>In the verbal energy and bathos of Marmeladov, as well as in the impoverished situation of his family, critics have observed that the literary progenitor of Marmeladov is Dickens' Micawber.

<sup>16</sup>This is discussed in a note at the bottom of the text of *Crime and Punishment*, p. 11.

<sup>17</sup>Dorothy Van Ghent, "The Dickens World: A View from Todgers's," rpt. in Martin Price's *Dickens: A Collection of Critical Essays*, pp. 24-38.

<sup>18</sup>Charles Dickens, *Letters*, III, p. 271.

<sup>19</sup>In *Eugene Onegin* there are frequent allusions to the London scene and particularly to its dandies.

<sup>20</sup>Quoted at the end of the text of *Crime and Punishment*, p. 532.

<sup>21</sup>Nicholas Berdyaev, *Dostoevsky*, p. 22.

<sup>22</sup>Fyodor Dostoevsky, "Notes from Underground," rpt. in *The Short Novels of Dostoevsky*, p. 152.

<sup>23</sup>Quoted by Henry Gifford in "Dickens in Russia," p. 121.

<sup>24</sup>This idea is presented by John Bayley in "Oliver Twist: 'Things as they Really Are,'" rpt. in Martin Price's *Dickens: A Collection of Critical Essays*, p. 93.

<sup>25</sup>Teachers often had humble origins and there were often conflicts between their origins and the positions to which they had arrived.

<sup>26</sup>Quoted at the end of the text of *Crime and Punishment*, p. 536.

<sup>27</sup>Steven Marcus, *Dickens from Pickwick to Dombey*, p. 234.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 235.

<sup>29</sup>In 1865 Louis Napoleon's *Histoire de Jules César* was introduced into Russia which contained a similar argument to that presented by Raskolnikov.

<sup>30</sup>Dostoevsky himself had some problems ascertaining Raskolnikov's motives.

<sup>31</sup>Quoted at the end of the text of *Crime and Punishment*, p. 539.



<sup>32</sup>The alienation of Headstone and Raskolnikov calls to mind the figure of Jonas Chuzzlewit who huddled in his room away from the rest of society after his act of murder.

<sup>33</sup>Edward Wasiolek, in *Dostoevsky: The Major Fiction* makes this observation. See his p. 70.

<sup>34</sup>Raskolnikov's dreams may be briefly summarized as follows:

a. The dream of the poor nag. On his way to visit his grandmother's grave, the young child (Raskolnikov) watches a peasant beat his old and tired horse to death (p. 52).

b. He dreams that Petrovitch was beating his landlady, and he cannot realize that it is a dream and not actuality (p. 110).

c. He dreams that he tries to kill the old woman but she will not die, but laughs at him (pp. 266-267).

d. In the "Epilogue" he has a dream about microbes which will infest and destroy almost all the citizens of Europe and eventually the world, except for a select few (pp. 523-524).

It is significant as well that the "crooked image" of Raskolnikov, Svidrigaylov, has hallucinations in which his dead wife Marfa visits him. Prior to his suicide, he also has dreams about some aspect of death.

<sup>35</sup>The article by Norman Page, "'A language fit for heroes;'" Speech in *Oliver Twist and Our Mutual Friend*," pp. 100-107, puts forth this view.



## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

The foregoing examination of these four novels, *Little Dorrit* and *The Brothers Karamazov*, *Our Mutual Friend* and *Crime and Punishment*, has attempted to test the frequent critical contention that their authors are significantly comparable. When read side by side, the novels call to mind unexpected resemblances and similar questions. Their moral visions are, indeed, comparable.

As a word of qualification, it must, of course, be granted that Dickens' interest in crime, criminals, and imprisonment, for example, is, in part, not only due to his own personal link with incarceration, but to the popularity of "Newgate Fiction" or the "Sensation Novel," fictional modes of the time. And Dickens himself collaborated with Wilkie Collins, who is known, primarily, as a writer in that tradition. Similarly, Dostoevsky had a penchant for the sensationalism of Eugène Sue. And he too was interested in criminality and the subject of punishment because of his own exile and imprisonment. Crime, as a subject for the Victorian as well as the Russian reading audience was, somehow, more respectable than, for example, sex. Moreover, if crime, poverty, and the heartless deprivations of innocent children are important as subjects in the novels, this is, also, explained by their being inescapable social problems of the time. Penal and legal reform were urgent matters of the day. What is important about Dickens' and Dostoevsky's



concerns with social problems, however, is the way in which they understood them, and in the methods they propounded for the improvement of their respective societies. George Orwell's comments upon Dickens' social and political awareness are illuminating in this respect. Of Dickens' reforming bent Orwell writes:

His radicalism is of the vaguest kind, and yet one always knows that it is there. That is the difference between being a moralist and a politician. He has no constructive suggestions, not even a clear grasp of the nature of the society he is attacking, only an emotional perception that something is wrong. All he can finally say is, "Behave decently," which . . . is not necessarily so shallow as it sounds. Most revolutionaries are potential Tories, because they imagine that everything can be put right by altering the *shape* of society; once that change is effected, as it sometimes is, they see no need for any other. Dickens has not this kind of mental coarseness. The vagueness of his discontent is the mark of its permanence. What he is out against is not this or that institution, but as Chesterton put it, "an expression on the human face." Roughly speaking, his morality is the Christian morality, but in spite of his Anglican upbringing he was essentially a Bible-Christian, as he took care to make plain when writing his will.<sup>1</sup>

When Orwell talks about Dickens' criticism of society as being "almost exclusively moral"<sup>2</sup> and that "his target is not so much society as 'human nature,'"<sup>3</sup> the same kind of observation applies equally to Dostoevsky. What Dostoevsky desires is, in essence, moral change. The world is to be transformed by the image of Christ, by love and brotherhood.

Dickens believes in the Gospels, in a religion of love and brotherhood, in the defence of the child and the child-like, and is against their oppressors. What Dickens presents in his novels is a version of Christian humanism. Dostoevsky's view is analogous, except that human goodness and love are not innate and natural, but eminently unnatural. Love of mankind--the basis of any moral evolution--demands the supernatural. Without belief in the soul and



immortality, and without some miraculous perception of transcendence, there can be no renewal for man and his world. Dostoevsky writes,

Without a higher idea, neither a man, nor a nation can exist. But on earth there is *only one* higher idea, and namely--the idea of the immortality of the human soul, for all the other higher ideas of life, by which man can live, flow from it alone. . . .<sup>4</sup>

Though Dickens refers to angels and an after-life, his tone is less convinced. Dickens believes in innate goodness--rare, but possible--while Dostoevsky does not. Dickens maintains a belief in "benevolence," in a goodness uncontaminated by the disease of the surrounding environment. Dostoevsky, on the contrary, believes that the penalty of experience is inevitable guilt. He holds, however, that guilt, sin, and criminality can lead to great virtue and even to sainthood. Dostoevsky also differentiates between essential innocence and apparent innocence. Innocence may be maintained so long as the essential nature of the character is uncontaminated by his activities. Thus, Sonya can be a prostitute while remaining a pure person. Because her actions are altruistic, she is unsullied by what she does. For Dickens innocence tends to be unchanging. Usually a good character is irreversibly good. Dostoevsky, therefore, considers moral crime while invalidating social crime. Dickens often, although not always, acknowledges social deviations as a form of criminal activity.

As his monstrous grotesques reveal, Dickens believes in absolute evil and in total depravity. For Dostoevsky, evil is also never relative; it is real and horrific, but unlike evil in Dickens' characterizations, it is always redeemable. And while Dostoevsky probes the meaning of evil, Dickens describes the experience of it.



Dickens' evil monsters are characterized by their vitality and energy. And these characters are depicted as being themselves in a kind of eternal stasis. Dostoevsky's characters are always evolving, destroying what they previously were, and contradicting and opposing even their own beings. The crimes of Dostoevsky's characters are deliberate and pre-meditated. Dickens' characters are frequently guilty of nameless crimes, the sources of which involve not only the characters themselves and their immediate surroundings, but the very basis of the organization of their respective worlds.

If, then, the specific details of their moral visions are different, manifesting the uniqueness of each author, there is one area of the art of both Dickens and Dostoevsky that draws their visions closer together. The similarity lies in their mutual use of the grotesque, the fantastic, the macabre, and sometimes the blackly comic unexpectedness of character and situation. Thus Marmeladov, frequenting a tavern in a drunken state, can speak eloquently and ecstatically about the Judgment Day. And then he returns to his wife on hands and knees, penitent and enjoying his humiliation. The buffoonery of old Fyodor Karamazov at the unfortunate gathering at the monastery creates a kind of moral uneasiness. In the midst of his scandalous behavior, the old buffoon exhibits a startlingly clear cynicism when he points out that his immoral activities make the pious monks feel smug in their cultivated goodness. Similarly, in Dickens' depiction of Miss Havisham at Satis House there is a disquieting sensation of a world completely out of order. But the awareness of an inverted moral order is not immediately apprehended by the reader. Rather, because of the narrator Pip's control of



the narrative, the reader is rather pleased by the young boy's acceptance into Miss Havisham's pretentious household. What the reader therefore accepts as rightful is a world which appears to be anticipating a marriage feast (the celebration of love realized). What he sees, in truth, is a decaying house (both physically and spiritually) ruled by an aged corpse in a wedding gown who is pre-occupied in everlasting retribution against mankind, instructing the young Estella not how to love but to hate, and more horrifically, to destroy others. The fusion of the organic with the inorganic, or the human with animal elements in Dickens' malevolent characters demonstrates without didacticism the appearance and the effects of evil upon its perpetrators. In brief, the function of the grotesque in relation to the moral vision of these two authors is to retain the complexity, the plenitude, and, sometimes, the absurdity of human experience. Moreover, the world may be a waking nightmare, but its demonic aspects may be somewhat subdued by the vehicle of art.

In "Apropos of the Exhibition" (1873) Dostoevsky writes the following:

We, however, understand Dickens in Russian, I am sure, almost as well as the English--perhaps, even with all nuances; moreover, we love him, perhaps, not less than his own countrymen.<sup>5</sup>

Dostoevsky greatly admired Dickens and felt he understood his greatness. What he perhaps did not realize is that there was a resemblance between his writings and those of Dickens. He concerned himself with a microscopic examination of the human soul. Dickens described its images. Therefore, when John Gardner writes that



when "Dickens wept over Little Nell it was not because he was a subtle metaphysician. He mistook her for human," he points to both the similarity and the difference between the two authors. Dostoevsky is, indeed, the greater metaphysician, but as a magician, Dickens can create, for the "moment" of his novels, an equally satisfying illusion of life.



Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>George Orwell, "Charles Dickens," rpt. in *The Dickens Critics*, ed. George H. Ford and Lauriat Lane, p. 168.

<sup>2</sup>George Orwell, "Dickens," rpt. in *Discussions of Charles Dickens*, ed. William Ross Clark, p. 31.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>4</sup>Quoted by Konstantin Mochulsky, *Dostoevsky: His Life and Work*, p. 563.

<sup>5</sup>Quoted by Michael Futrell in "Dickens and Dostoyevsky," p. 48.

<sup>6</sup>Quoted in *Time*, January 1, 1973, p. 55 as a review of John Gardner's *The Sunlight Dialogues*.



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